The pride of North Carolina's electric cooperatives

Volume 48, No. 5, May 2016

Carolina Country

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Around the House

Electrical Safety Month

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

PERIODICAL

An illustrated guide to North Carolina's electric power providers—page 12

Here, our 9 to 5 seems a world away.
From the chopping of wood to the sudden silence of a freshly oiled barn door,
the sounds of country life are filled with comfort and pride.
Here, it's easy to be thankful for every chore.
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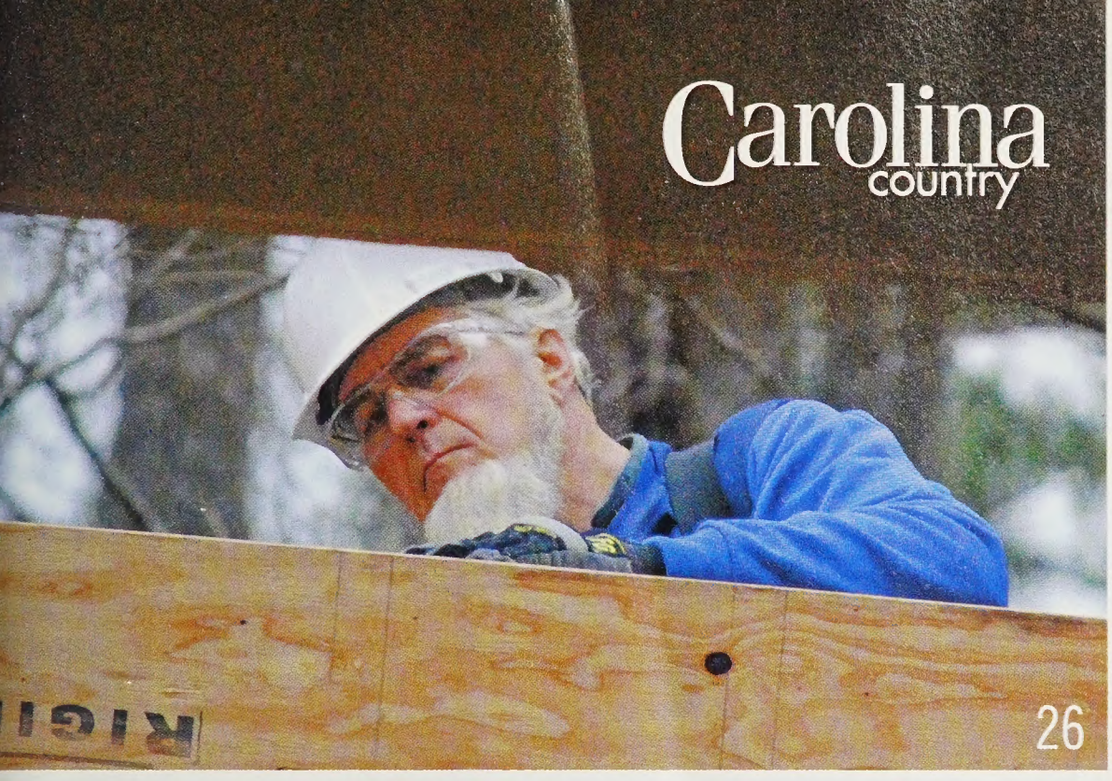
May 2016
Volume 48, No. 5



FEATURES

12 *North Carolina's Electric Power Providers*
An illustrated guide to the electric power providers that serve North Carolina.

15 *Around the House*
Advice for home improvement: exterior upgrades, the power of paint, roofing and siding, custom windows and doors, and wooden deck prep.

26 *Amish Craftsmen Raise a Building for 4-H Camp*
New learning center makes Millstone 4-H Camp a year-round destination.

28 *Snapshot Sisters*
And other things you remember.

FAVORITES

4 **Viewpoint**
Advocating for you.

8 **More Power to You**
America mobilizes for energy efficiency.

30 **Carolina Country Store**
Locating boating access areas.

31 **Where Is This?**
Somewhere in Carolina Country.

31 **Photo of the Month**
Hopie the Underchicken.

32 **Carolina Compass**
Billy Graham exhibit at the N.C. Museum of History in Raleigh.

36 **Joyner's Corner**
Is your house commodious?

38 **Energy Cents**
Energy efficiency projects.

39 **Marketplace**
A showcase of goods and services.

40 **On The House**
Washable air filters.

41 **Classified Ads**

42 **Carolina Kitchen**
Asparagus with Garlic and Thyme, Oven-Fried Catfish, Italian Cream Pie and Cherry Nut Dessert.

ON THE COVER
Rev. Billy Graham recording a radio program in the early 1950s. Learn more about a new museum exhibit chronicling Graham's life on page 35. (Photo courtesy of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.)

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North Carolina's electric cooperatives provide reliable, safe and affordable electric service to nearly 900,000 homes and businesses. The 26 electric cooperatives are each member-owned, not-for-profit and overseen by a board of directors elected by the membership.

Why Do We Send You Carolina Country Magazine?
Your cooperative sends you Carolina Country as a convenient, economical way to share with its members information about services, director elections, meetings and management decisions. The magazine also carries legal notices that otherwise would be published in other media at greater cost.

Your co-op's board of directors authorizes a subscription to Carolina Country on behalf of the membership at a cost of less than $5 per year.

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Advocating for you

By Nelle Hotchkiss

In the 1930s, our predecessors from communities across North Carolina and the nation built the electric cooperative program from the ground up. These pioneers—farmers, workers and people like you and me—made their voices heard by working with elected officials in our state capitol and in Washington, D.C., to get the lights turned on in rural areas.

This month, board members and employees from all 26 of North Carolina's electric cooperatives will carry forth that tradition as they meet with elected officials who serve us in Raleigh and Washington, D.C. These meetings provide opportunities to work with and educate our elected officials, but the scope has grown as new industry challenges have emerged and as cooperatives have evolved into modern utilities with sophisticated service offerings.

> As local utilities, we have a clear understanding of how policy decisions affect lives "back home."

The foundation of our work with elected officials is education. Our elected officials, who come from a variety of backgrounds, need to understand the electric industry and the needs of our communities more fully to make informed decisions about issues that could affect the people and communities back home.

As local utilities, we have a clear understanding of how policy decisions affect lives "back home." We know that cost increases incurred as a result of new regulations or legislation could really impact the lives of our cooperative members and the vitality of local communities.

Our work with federal and state legislators is meant to encourage them to craft policies that mitigate the economic impacts of new laws and regulations while balancing environmental or other benefits. While many new regulations will drive cost increases in the electric industry, as not-for-profit utilities we understand what these cost increases mean to your bottom line. We believe that we can work with our elected officials—just as our electric cooperative founders did—to balance the impact of new legislation on our members while preserving the beauty and heritage of North Carolina.

Our country is led by those who participate in the political process whether that be by voting, advocating for beliefs or running for office. It is our responsibility to participate in this process as representatives of cooperative members and advocates for our local communities. Together, we will continue our shared mission of bringing 2.5 million members across the state safe, affordable, reliable and environmentally responsible power.

Nelle Hotchkiss is senior vice president of Corporate Relations for the North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives.

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Find us on facebook at carolinacountry.com/facebook

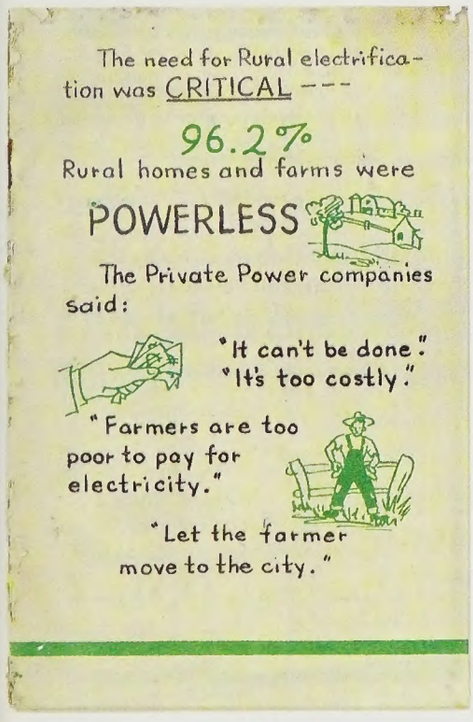
Touchstone Energy sports camper says "Thank You"

Hi Ms. Listrom and Ms. Howard,

I know you probably don't remember me, but last year you selected me for the Roy Williams basketball camp [as a Touchstone Energy Sports Camp scholarship winner]. I was so thrilled to get the chance to be a part of such a prestigious camp. I wanted to say thank you again to both of you. I also wanted to let you know that this year I made the middle school basketball team at my school. We had an undefeated season in our county. I attribute part of this success to the camp I was able to attend last summer. It helped give me confidence and increase my focus on the fundamentals of the game. I am forever grateful for the opportunity I was given through both of you. I hope to continue working on improving my basketball skills and be able to play in high school next year. Thank you again!

Sincerely,
Rex Hardy III, Wilmington, New Hanover County (I am No. 6 in the picture)

Editor's Note: Lindsey Listrom and Tonya Howard help coordinate the Touchstone Energy Sports Camp scholarship program for North Carolina's 26 electric cooperatives. And yes, they both do remember Rex! The state's electric co-ops send more than 50 students to summer basketball camps on full scholarships each year.


The need for Rural electrification was CRITICAL ---
96.2%
Rural homes and farms were
POWERLESS
The Private Power companies said:
"It can't be done."
"It's too costly."
"Farmers are too poor to pay for electricity."
"Let the farmer move to the city."

The electric cooperative story

A Wake Electric member shared this pamphlet from 1949–1950 that told the NC electric cooperatives story: "Electricity for every farm," laughed the skeptics, "is an impossible task. It can't be done." "It will be done," said the determined farmers and they rolled up their sleeves and went to work [bringing electricity to the farms]. The pamphlet explains that the first N.C. electric membership corporations started with less than 500 members total and a handful of employees. At the pamphlet's date of printing, the co-ops totaled 115,000 members. Today, N.C. electric cooperatives serve more than 2.5 million members across the state.

See more pages from the pamphlet at carolinacountry.com

Corrections to April issue:

In our April 2016 Carolina Country Adventures section, please note the following corrections: The map on page 47 failed to mark the Cape Lookout Lighthouse with a national parks key symbol. On page 53, the Ocracoke Lighthouse has an additional website and phone number for information at ocracokevillage.com and 252-928-6711. On page 55, the photo of the Lost Colony actor should have been labeled Queen Elizabeth I. On page 58, in Rutherfordton, the first one-dollar gold coin was minted in 1832, not 1932. Also, Washburn's General Store in Bostic has been family run since 1831, not 1931. And finally, on page 60, the Vordach Zip Line Park boasts a 15-stop canopy tour, not 10, and the correct phone number is 828-743-7663.

PEV enthusiast

We own one! A Nissan Leaf [Try This!, "PEVS," April 2016]. We love it. It costs about $0.04/mile to charge the battery. At $2 per gallon of gas prices you'd have to get 50 mpg to equal that. While four cents is a good deal, that is not the primary reason we bought the car. We wanted to do our part to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and reduce fossil fuel consumption and pollution. Grid electricity uses NO foreign oil. I'm not sure about Union Power, but nationwide about one-third of our power comes from non-fossil fuels. Even the 50 mpg vehicle is still using 100 percent fossil fuel. And renewable energy sources are growing every day. So we win three times: cost to operate, no foreign oil and greatly reduced consumption of fossil fuels.

Mike and Ann Wade, Stanfield,
A member of Union Power Cooperative

Editor's note: Non-fossil fuels make up an estimated 60 percent of the power purchased by Union Power Cooperative and North Carolina's electric cooperatives.

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Ancient beauty trapped in mines for centuries is finally released and available to the public!

King Solomon was one of the wealthiest rulers of the ancient world. His vast empire included hoards of gold, priceless gemstones and rare works of art. For centuries, fortune hunters and historians dedicated their lives to the search for his fabled mines and lost treasure. But as it turns out, those mines hid a prize more beautiful and exotic than any precious metal: chrysocolla.

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America mobilizes for energy efficiency

Since 1970, greater energy efficiency has grown right along with better protection of the environment. Here are a few examples of increases in energy efficiency during the past decades:

The fuel economy of cars and other motor vehicles in the U.S. has improved from 12.2 miles per gallon in 1975 to 17.6 in 2013. You might think this would mean cars have lost some of their "giddyup," but horsepower steadily increased during that time, and 0-60 mph acceleration went from 14 seconds to 8 seconds.

New light bulb technologies shine when it comes to using less energy. The Department of Energy says that from 2001 to 2010, lumens per watt rose from 45 to 58. That resulted in a 9 percent drop in the amount of electricity used for lighting during a decade when the number of bulbs increased 18 percent.

The Department of Energy's Energy Star program of efficiency ratings for everything from appliances to buildings says people bought 5.2 billion ENERGY STAR-rated products, saving $34 billion in energy bills since the program began in 1992.

Here's what experts predict for the future.

The Department of Energy reports that super-efficient light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs saved $1.8 billion in energy costs in 2013, and that $39 billion would be saved if all bulbs switched to LEDs.

A report from the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy says "there are large and cost-effective energy efficiency opportunities that, by 2050, can collectively reduce energy use by 40 to 60 percent relative to current forecasts."

"The best is yet to come," says Brian Sloboda, an energy expert with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). Sloboda sees "amazing new technologies" that will continue the progress in energy efficiency.

He cites lighting as an example of how far we've come and how far we can still go. Light bulb efficiency has skyrocketed in the last 20 years, from incandescent lights, to compact fluorescent lights (the curly CFL bulbs), to LEDs. A promising new technology, OLEDs—organic light emitting diodes, isn't even a bulb, but lighting made of flexible material that can be applied to a variety of surfaces.

"Instead of having ceiling lights, the ceiling would actually be made of OLED material. During the day it looks like a regular ceiling, but at night the ceiling itself would glow," says Sloboda. "Instead of having light poles or roadway lighting, you could actually make the OLED material into the roadway so the stripes on the road provide the lighting. It could completely change the way architects design our buildings."

The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) lists a variety of steps for a more efficient future. Those include better energy habits in our own lives, more efficient electronic equipment and smart systems (like thermostats) that adjust to your daily schedule.

"If we aggressively pursue these efficiency opportunities," says the ACEEE, "we can roughly double the rate of efficiency improvement in the next 35 years relative to the past 35 and reduce energy use to half the current forecasts."

— Paul Wesslund, NRECA

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

ON THE RISE

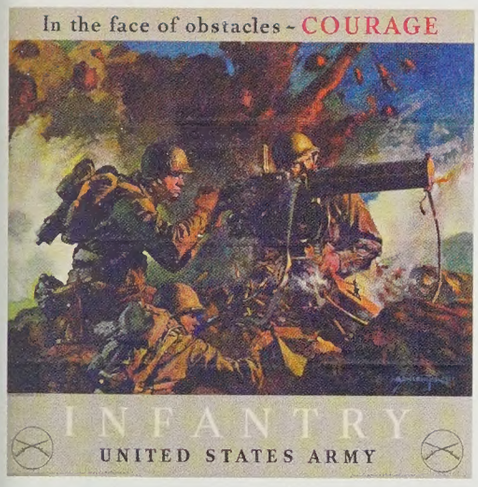
Here is a snapshot of a few major efficiency trends in the U.S.

The fuel economy of cars and other motor vehicles in the U.S. has improved from 12.2 miles per gallon in 1975 to 17.6 miles per gallon in 2013.

The Department of Energy's ENERGY STAR program has saved $34 billion in energy bills since the program began in 1992

The Department of Energy reports that super-efficient LED bulbs saved $1.8 billion in energy costs in 2013.

Veterans' stories sought by NC State Archives



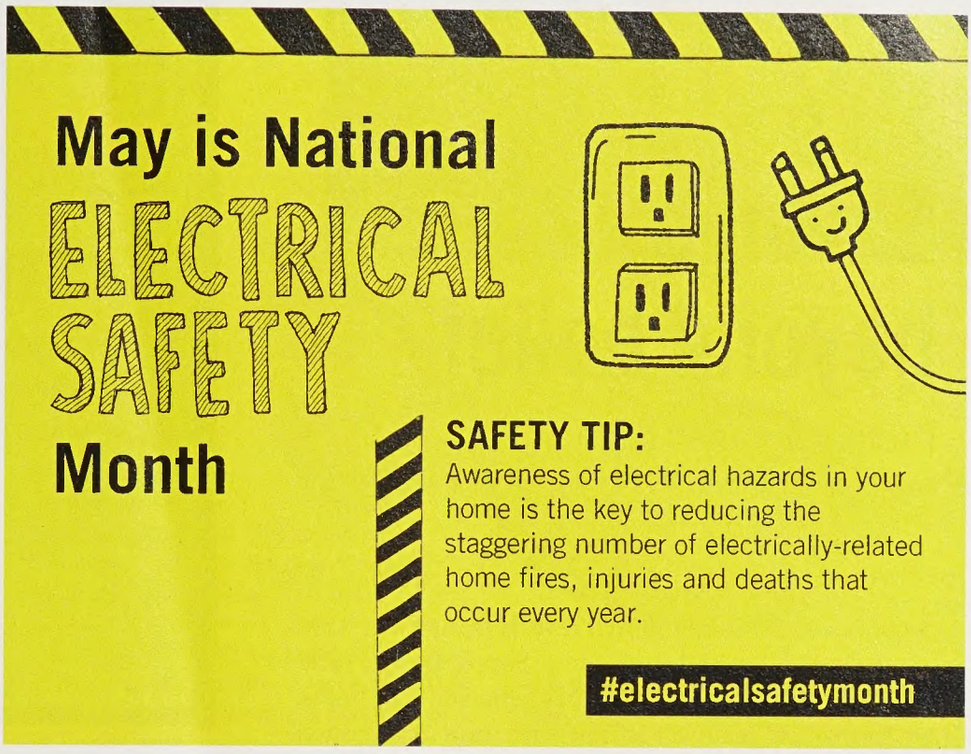
Have a story to tell? The State Archives of North Carolina is asking veterans to share military experiences in times of war or peace through its Military Collection Veterans Oral History Program. The purpose of the program is to preserve the memories of servicemen and women from North Carolina for the benefit of the public and scholars.

Volunteers from around the state began interviews for the Military Collection in 1996, which currently consists of more than 1,100 interviews including veterans from World War I to the Iraq War.

Active military combat service is not a requirement for a veteran to be interviewed. If a veteran has served in the U.S. Armed Forces in any capacity and matches the listed criteria of the program, his or her story is important to the historical memory of North Carolina and its citizens.

The Military Collection is particularly interested in documenting the military service of Korean War veterans, Vietnam War veterans, minorities, women, prisoners of war, special operations personnel and those serving in noncombat positions in the Cold War era.

The oral history program is part of the Office of Archives and History in the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. For more information, visit ow.ly/10savS. Or contact the Military Collection Archivist, Matthew Peek, at 919-807-7314, or by email at matthew.peek@ncdcr.gov with the subject line "Veteran Interview Request."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SAFETY
Month
SAFETY TIP:
Awareness of electrical hazards in your home is the key to reducing the staggering number of electrically-related home fires, injuries and deaths that occur every year.
#electricalsafetymonth

Natural gas to become leading fuel

For the first time during a calendar year, more U.S. electricity is projected to come from natural gas than from coal, according to new data from the Energy Information Administration (EIA).

In its Short-Term Energy Outlook, EIA said it has revised its estimate, made last month, of how coal-based plant retirements will affect generation in the coming years.

"Coal generation is now expected to decline by 3 percent in 2016, in contrast to relatively little change forecast in last month's [report]," EIA said March 8.

If EIA's projections are correct, coal's share of power generation will be 32 percent in 2016, slightly less than the 33.4 percent share forecast for natural gas.

While natural gas generation had surpassed coal in some months, EIA said its new numbers represent the first time natural gas has been the leading fuel source on an annual basis.

The two fuels are likely to run neck and neck in generation in 2017 as long as natural gas prices move up from their current historic lows, EIA said.

EIA said 18 gigawatts of coal, or about 4.6 percent of U.S. coal capacity, was retired in 2015, primarily in Ohio, Georgia, and Kentucky as a result of low natural gas prices and new environmental regulations.

"About 30 percent of the coal capacity that retired in 2015 occurred in April, which is when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS) rule went into effect," the agency said.

Some coal plants applied for and received one-year extensions, meaning that many of the coal retirements expected in 2016 are likely to occur in April, EIA added.

The mild winter weather also has slowed down the use of coal, EIA said, forecasting that coal consumption in the power sector — as opposed to generation — will fall by 4 percent as a result.

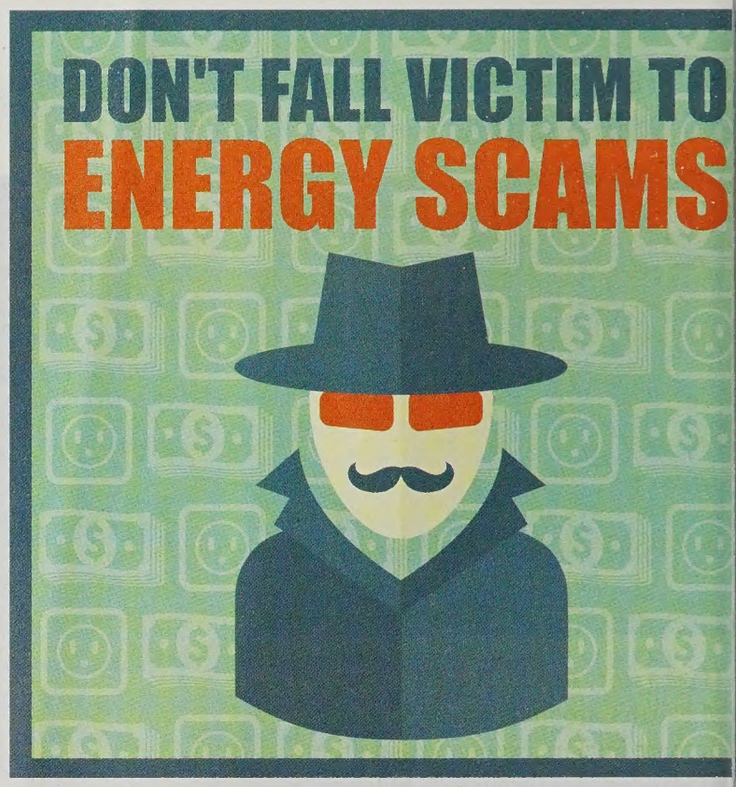
—Steven Johnson, ECT.coop

Try This!

Savings beyond belief

Protect yourself against energy claims too good to be true

By Brian Sloboda



A quick search of the Internet reveals many great ways to save energy around your home. Simple things, such as adding insulation or using energy-efficient light bulbs, are simple and relatively inexpensive ways to save small amounts of energy.

The same search will also reveal "amazing" products that claim to cut up to a third of your energy bill—without you changing your energy use habits. Claims like this sound too good to be true, and there is good reason for that. These claims almost always turn out to be exaggerations or downright lies.

An energy efficiency scam is generally easy for a person who works at an electric cooperative to spot and identify. However, it isn't so easy for most people. Scams generally center around misstatements of science or confusion over utility programs.

Too good to be true

A popular scam is a little box that promises to save you energy. The box is a device that supposedly saves energy without the consumer making any changes to behavior, turning anything off or adjusting the thermostat. The people who sell these boxes often claim outrageous energy savings—sometimes as much as 30 percent or more. They often use terms, such as power conditioning, capacitors and power factor, all of which are legitimate industry terms.

The sales pitch usually goes something like this: The device being sold will control alternating current, power factor and reduce the cost of electric bills. It will condition your power and make appliances last longer. The device uses no power and has no moving parts. It will make the motors in your home run better. The sales material often claims that the utility doesn't want you to know about the device. That last part is actually true—because it is a rip off. Variations of the product have been sold to both residential and commercial customers.

There are several questions that you should ask a salesperson (or yourself!) when reading an ad for the next magical cure-all:

- Does it violate the laws of science? Some products claim that they are capable of "changing the molecular structure ... to release never-before tapped power." Changing the laws of science is no easy task. If the inventors truly can do this, the product will surely be sold at every store in the nation, and they will become very wealthy. They won't be mailing out flyers or operating from a poorly designed web site.
- Was the product tested by an independent group like a national lab or university?
- Is it too good to be true?

Sometimes energy scammers contact consumers directly, either by calling or stopping by and claiming they represent the local electric co-op. Never give anyone personal or financial information who claims to be an employee of the co-op without confirming their identity. If they call, ask for a call back number, then verify their identity with your co-op. If they stop by, ask the person for a valid employee ID.

Asking tough questions and being skeptical will not offend honest people. Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Brian Sloboda is a technical research analyst specializing in energy efficiency and renewable energy for Business and Technology Strategies (BTS), a service of the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

For more information on how to save energy, including a virtual house tour, go to TOGETHERWESAVE.COM

Urgent: Special Summer Driving Notice

To some, sunglasses are a fashion accessory...

But When Driving, These Sunglasses May Save Your Life!

Studies by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) show that most (74%) of the crashes occurred on clear, sunny days

Drivers' Alert: Driving can expose you to more dangerous glare than any sunny day at the beach can... do you know how to protect yourself?

The sun rises and sets at peak travel periods, during the early morning and afternoon rush hours and many drivers find themselves temporarily blinded while driving directly into the glare of the sun. Deadly accidents are regularly caused by such blinding glare with danger arising from reflected light off another vehicle, the pavement, or even from waxed and oily windshields that can make matters worse. Early morning dew can exacerbate this situation. Yet, motorists struggle on despite being blinded by the sun's glare that can cause countless accidents every year.

Not all sunglasses are created equal.
Protecting your eyes is serious business. With all the fancy fashion frames out there it can be easy to overlook what really matters—the lenses. So we did our research and looked to the very best in optic innovation and technology.

Sometimes it does take a rocket scientist. A NASA rocket scientist.
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Eagle Eyes® features the most advanced eye protection technology ever created. The TriLenium® Lens Technology offers triple-filter polarization to block 99.9% UVA and UVB—plus the added benefit of blue-light eye protection. Eagle Eyes® is the only optic technology that has earned official recognition from the Space Certification Program for this remarkable technology. Now, that's proven science-based protection.

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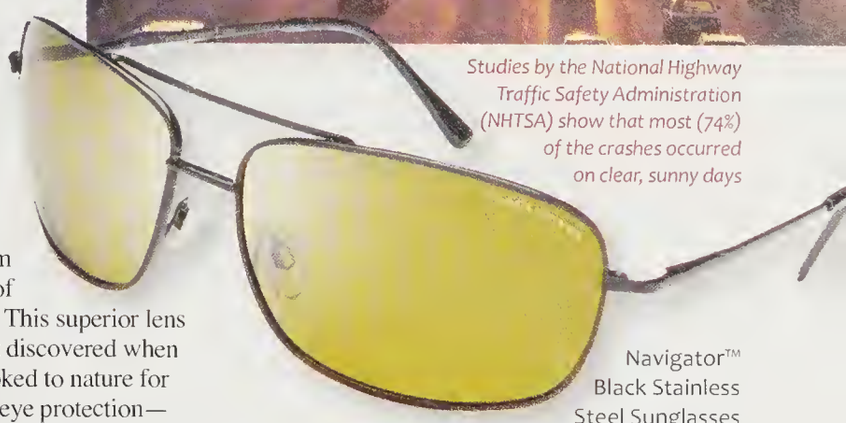

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A Guide to North Carolina's

More than 100 separately organized electric power providers serve nearly 10 million people in North Carolina. Each covers a designated service area, and depending upon where you live, your electric service could come from a consumer-owned electric cooperative, an investor-owned utility, your city government, a university-owned utility or some other utility operating in the state.

History & Service Areas

In the early days of electrification, power was only available in larger communities where power companies could count on sufficient economic return. In the 1930s and '40s, rural North Carolinians formed cooperatives that they could own and manage themselves to bring electricity to more sparsely populated regions.

After World War II, growth in North Carolina's towns and cities began spilling over into these formerly rural areas. In 1965, the North Carolina Utilities Commission (an agency of state government formed in 1891) brought together investor-owned utilities and cooperatives in order to define and assign service areas.

This division of service areas still stands today, although with some modifications. In 2005, state legislation clarified the procedures by which cooperatives and municipal electric systems negotiate their respective service areas in relation to one another.

In the summer of 2012, a merger of the investor-owned utilities Duke Energy and Progress Energy formed the largest regulated utility in the nation. Duke Energy (the official name of the merged corporations) serves some 7.4 million electric accounts in six states, including about 3.3 million in North Carolina.

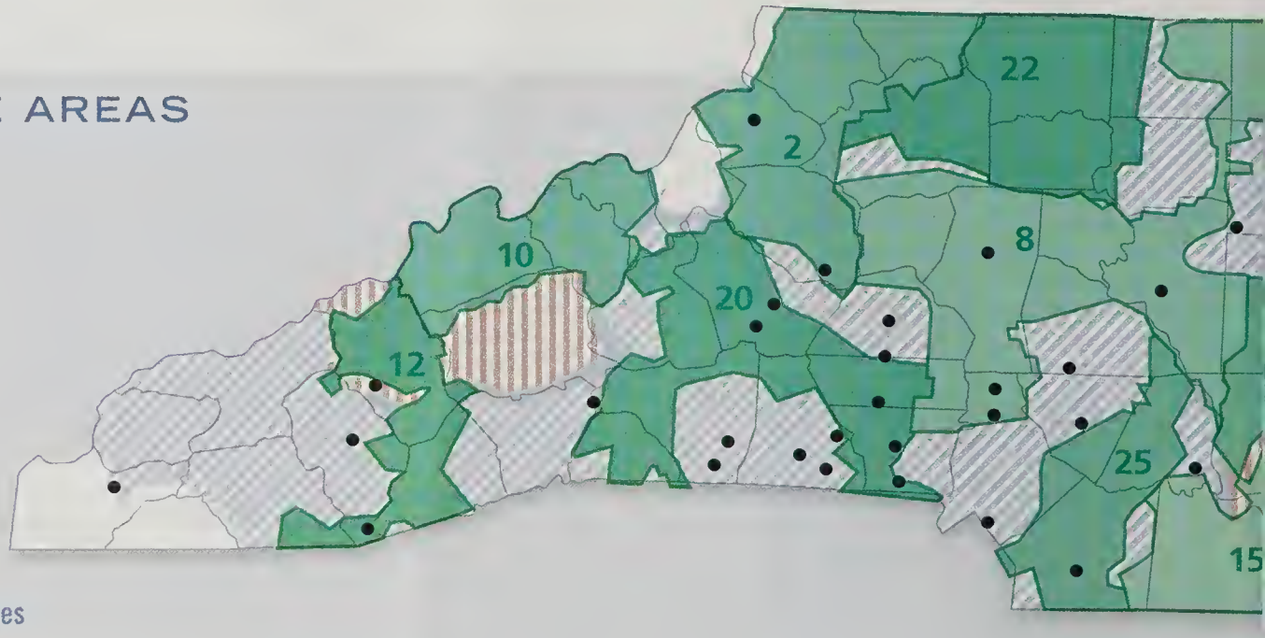
Regulation

The North Carolina Utilities Commission has jurisdiction over the licensing of new generating plants operated by all electric power providers and over the construction of new electric transmission facilities that are 161 kilovolts and above in size. Investor-owned utilities operate within the jurisdiction of the commission, which oversees their rates and service practices. Cooperatives and municipal electric systems are regulated by their own local governing bodies.

Cooperatives pay all the taxes that investor-owned utilities pay, except income tax because cooperatives are not-for-profit businesses.

The North Carolina Rural Electrification Authority, whose five members are appointed by the governor, reviews the cooperatives' federal loan applications and consumer comments.

SERVICE AREAS



Electric cooperatives

1. Albemarle EMC
2. Blue Ridge Electric
3. Brunswick EMC
4. Cape Hatteras Electric Cooperative
5. Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative
6. Central EMC
7. Edgecombe-Martin County EMC
8. EnergyUnited
9. Four County EMC
10. French Broad EMC
11. Halifax EMC
12. Haywood EMC
13. Jones-Onslow EMC
14. Lumbee River EMC
15. Pee Dee EMC
16. Piedmont EMC
17. Pitt & Greene EMC
18. Randolph EMC
19. Roanoke Electric Cooperative
20. Rutherford EMC
21. South River EMC
22. Surry Yadkin EMC
23. Tideland EMC
24. Tri-County EMC
25. Union Power Cooperative
26. Wake EMC

Electric Power Providers

Electric cooperatives

- 26 independent, not-for-profit electric power providers owned and governed by their local members.
- Approximately 1 million North Carolina homes, farms and businesses (approximately 2.5 million people) served by the 26 cooperatives (also known as electric membership corporations or EMCs). Their service areas extend to 93 of the state's 100 counties.
- 5 co-ops based in Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia and South Carolina serve border areas in North Carolina.
- 25 co-ops belong to the North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation, a generation and transmission cooperative that supplies its members with all or parts of their power needs. NCEMC's power mix includes owned assets and purchased power with more than half of its portfolio coming from nuclear generation, including shared ownership of Catawba Nuclear Station in York County, S.C. In addition to this emissions-free nuclear source, NCEMC's owned assets include two natural-gas peak generating plants (Anson and Richmond counties) and two diesel-powered generating facilities in Buxton and Ocracoke. NCEMC is also working with many member cooperatives to facilitate the construction and incorporation of community solar farms across the state. Additionally, NCEMC is one of the largest buyers of wholesale electric power in the nation.
- All 26 N.C. co-ops belong to the North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives, a trade association that performs services statewide, including publishing Carolina Country.

Investor-owned electric utilities

Duke Energy Carolinas

- Headquartered in Charlotte.
- Serves approximately 2.5 million accounts in central and western North Carolina and western South Carolina in a service area of approximately 24,000 square miles.

Duke Energy Progress

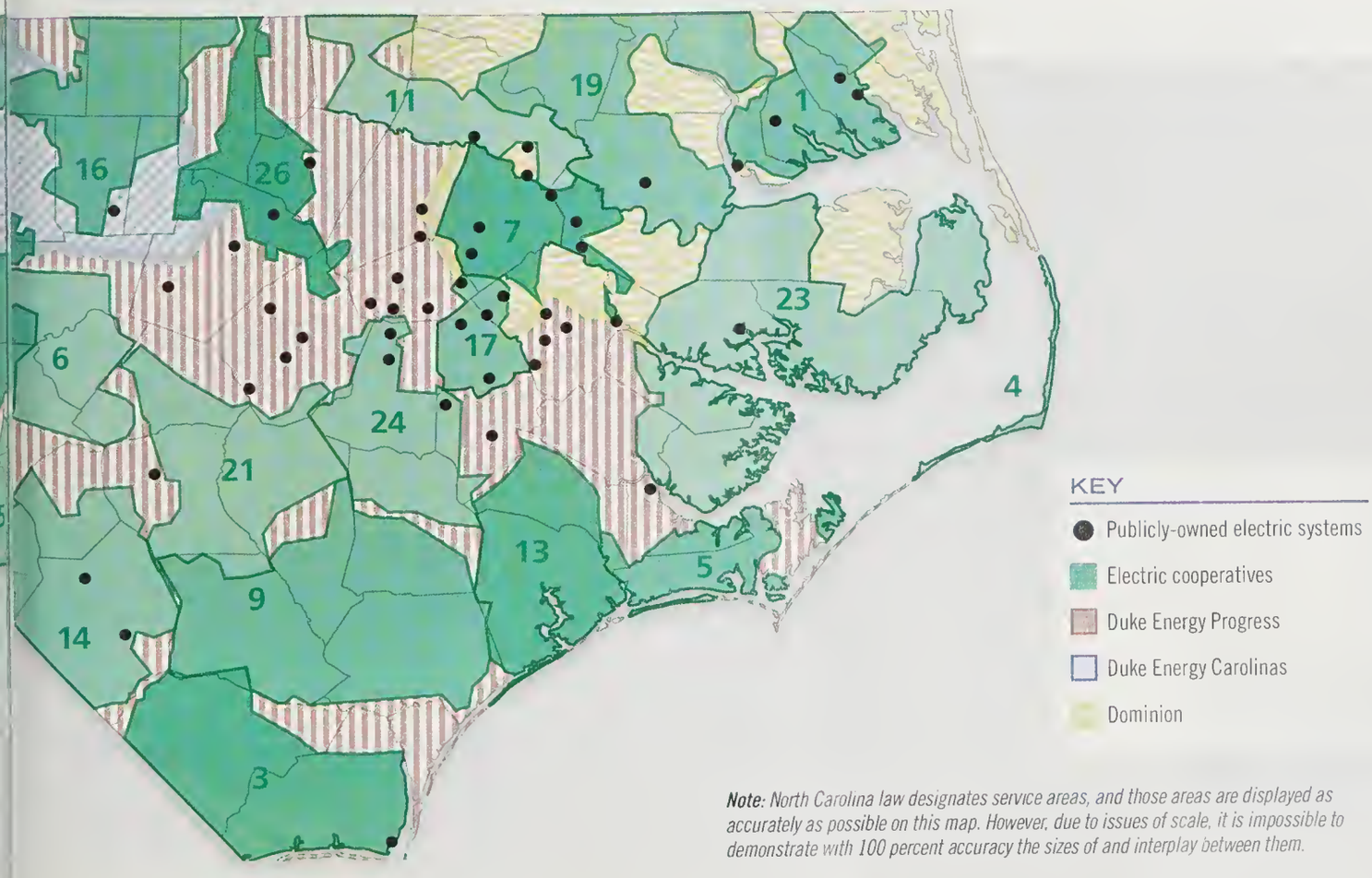
- Wholly-owned subsidiary of Duke Energy.
- Serves approximately 1.5 million accounts in central and eastern North Carolina, plus an area in and around Asheville and northeastern South Carolina. The total service area is approximately 32,000 square miles.

Dominion

- Headquartered in Richmond, VA. Operates in northeastern North Carolina as Dominion North Carolina Power.
- Serves approximately 120,000 North Carolina accounts.

Municipal & University-owned systems

- More than 70 municipally-owned electric systems serve approximately 500,000 North Carolina households and businesses within some city and town limits.
- Several of our state's universities serve their campuses with electric facilities that they own and operate within the municipal electric system structure.
- Most of the municipal and university-owned electric systems are members of ElectriCities, an umbrella non-profit organization that provides its member systems services such as training, member and government relations, communications and emergency assistance.
- ElectriCities also provides management services to two municipal power agencies that supply wholesale electricity directly to 51 ElectriCities members and indirectly to another five members. These power agencies are North Carolina Municipal Power Agency Number 1, which has partial interest in the Catawba Nuclear Station, and North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency.
- A portion of the electric power for these municipally-owned systems is purchased wholesale from investor-owned utilities.



Note: *North Carolina law designates service areas, and those areas are displayed as accurately as possible on this map. However, due to issues of scale, it is impossible to demonstrate with 100 percent accuracy the sizes of and interplay between them.*

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- Meeting Facilities
- Rec Halls
- Outdoor Education Programs
- Outdoor Living Skills
- Shooting Sports

How do Campers Register for Camp?

Fact - Youth do **NOT** have to be a 4-H club member to attend camp. To enroll, contact your county 4-H Agent at the Cooperative Extension Service office.

Register Online at www.nc4hcamps.org

18 USC 707

CURB APPEAL

Exterior improvements amp it up

By Damaine Vonada

You only have one chance to make a good first impression. That old saying is true for you as well as for your home.

Pride of ownership motivates many people to improve their home's curb appeal. "They want a house that immediately looks good when they're entertaining family and friends," says Lorin Miller, president of Miller Custom Exteriors in Fredericksburg, Ohio. Other customers want to give their home a fresh, updated appearance.

His company transformed a Queen Anne home from bland to beautiful using colors of russet red, classic blue, charcoal gray and almond. But homeowners want more than a house with a pretty face. Sprucing up the outside also presents an opportunity to say goodbye to chores like painting old siding. "With so many limitations on everyone's time today, people don't want to spend their free time maintaining their home's exterior."

Custom Exteriors

This historic Queen Anne home's appeal was enhanced by colorful siding, new metal slate roofs and new energy-efficient windows.

Exterior choices

Because it's relatively inexpensive and available in numerous colors, finishes and profiles, vinyl siding has been America's number one exterior cladding for decades. Its quality varies, however, and thin, cheap vinyl siding can eventually sag or lose luster. Miller prefers to use a thick vinyl siding that is impact-resistant and made in extra-long lengths to minimize seams and splices. He also advises homeowners that proper installation is paramount for vinyl siding. Miller says if it's put on right, it lays straight and flush and won't blow off.

A roof can enhance or diminish a home. In the 2015 Remodeling Impact Report from the National Association of Realtors, new roofing ranks highest among exterior projects appealing to home buyers.

Asphalt shingles are the nation's most common residential roofing material. They can last for years; are available at different price points; and offer design options ranging from traditional three-tab shingles to dimensional shingles to shingles that mimic wood shakes and slate. Miller's company also has installed hundreds of steel roofs on homes. Metal roofing costs roughly twice as much as asphalt, but "the real payback is how much longer it lasts down the road," Miller says.

When replacing windows, selecting the frame is mostly a matter of style, according to Miller. The Queen Anne house's double-hung windows, for example, complement its architecture and have white vinyl frames.

Trading drafty, dilapidated windows for modern, energy-efficient ones not only boosts curb appeal but also makes a house more comfy and reduces power bills. If homeowners can afford it, Miller recommends triple-pane windows. "They're way more efficient," he explains, "and help with noise reduction too."

Wood doors lend sophistication, but because they're costly and require routine care, many homeowners opt for steel or fiberglass. Generally, steel doors are less expensive and better for painting because of their smooth surface. Fiberglass doors—which can be made with wood-grain textures duplicating mahogany, cherry or oak—look great stained or painted.

Although steel and fiberglass doors are virtually maintenance free and available in a multitude of styles and decorative glass designs, Miller cautions: "You get what you pay for." Doors with tight-fitting frames, energy-efficient foam cores and glass inserts have higher price tags, but they'll look nicer, function better and survive longer.

Damaine Vonada is a freelance writer based in Xenia, Ohio.

POWER OF PAINT

Taking a closer look at choices

By Damaine Vonada

There's no doubt about it. Paint is one of the quickest and least expensive ways to punch up your home's curb appeal. A fresh coat of paint transforms shutters from drab to fab, and if you want to give your house a totally new look, painting the outside a different color costs far less than removing and replacing siding or other exterior materials.

Top tips

Here are six good tips from experts at paint producers Sherwin-Williams and Glidden companies about using paint to make your home the belle of the block:

"Make a statement when welcoming guests by painting your door a great new color, and choose a higher sheen for added impact."

— Misty Yeomans, Glidden

"Water-based exterior latex paints … are an excellent choice when painting many exterior surfaces, including stucco, vinyl siding, wood and weathered aluminum. These paints have more durability in terms of better color retention and resistance to blistering, cracking or peeling."

— Lisa Grdina, Sherwin-Williams

Water-based exterior latex paints have more durability and retain color longer while at the same time resisting blistering, cracking or peeling.

When selecting paint for your home's exterior, take its architectural style and era into consideration.

"Don't forget about your porch floor or ceiling, these are paintable surfaces, too, and make excellent areas to showcase a color. Accessorize with color by repurposing an old or found piece of furniture. Paint it a coordinating color to your home's color scheme. Repeat the colors from your home's color scheme two to three times throughout your décor for a professionally designed look."

— Misty Yeomans, Glidden

"When selecting paint color for the exterior of your home, there are several important factors to consider. First, consider the home's architectural style and era when selecting an exterior paint theme. A Victorian home painted in an olive tone will look jarring, while this color would complement a mid-century ranch home. Also, take into account your home's surroundings and the colorscapes of your neighbors' homes."

— Rachel Skafidas, Sherwin-Williams

"[Glidden introduced] a new exterior color card in February 2016 at the Home Depot to make choosing exterior colors easy. It features nine gorgeous three-color exterior combinations and associated photography so you can see the color schemes in action. It features three combinations of colors per each of three home styles — Charming Classics, New Communities and Southern Styles."

— Misty Yeomans, Glidden

"HGTV HOME by Sherwin-Williams' Color Visualizer on painton.com allows consumers to virtually paint the rooms in their home, including the exterior. Individuals can select from existing scenes or upload their own to see how the color can transform their home."

— Lisa Grdina, Sherwin-Williams

Damaine Vonada is a freelance writer based in Xenia, Ohio.

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GOING FROM DRAB TO FAB

Roofing and siding give a home 'personality'

By Damaine Vonada

If you have any doubt about how much roofing and siding affect your home's appearance, ask some kindergartners to draw a house. They always delineate the roof and exterior walls first, then complete the picture with doors, windows and a big smiling sun.

That's a real lesson in the basics of rejuvenating a house. "Get the right combination of exterior products, and you'll turn an average-looking house into something stunning," says CertainTeed Corporation spokesperson Mike Loughery.

Headquartered in Pennsylvania, CertainTeed supplies building materials worldwide, but it began as an asphalt roofing manufacturer more than a century ago. "Roofing is still CertainTeed's biggest business and core expertise," Loughery says.

CertainTeed has developed a wide variety of roofing products. "Our Landmark architectural shingles are the workhorse of the residential roofing industry," says Loughery. "They mimic wood shakes and slate at a fraction of the cost and maintenance." Other roofing collections include Patriot Shingles, which feature blended colors and natural-looking shadows.

Likewise, CertainTeed produces vinyl siding such as Monogram, which comes in some 40 colors and wood tones. Launched just this year, Cedar Impressions Sawmill Shingles feature a spectrum of shades that replicate the various stages of aging wood.

Fiber cement siding presents another option for homeowners who want a realistic wood look without wood's maintenance issues. "The advantage of fiber cement is that it won't melt or burn and lasts forever," says Tom Anderson, sales and marketing coordinator for Allura, a Houston-based fiber cement siding manufacturer. "Insurance companies rate it like brick or stone, which means a better rate on your homeowner's policy."

A composite consisting primarily of cement, cellulose fibers and silica, fiber cement siding is a favorite in neighborhoods where covenants ban vinyl. "It has great strength and flexibility, and because its wood grain is embossed, the siding looks very natural," says Anderson.

Allura's latest product is decking that extends fiber cement's benefits to the front porch or backyard. "Allura's fiber cement decking won't rot, chip or fade," says Anderson. "If you want a fire pit in your deck, you can have it because the planks don't burn."

Also burn-proof are the products made by North Dakota's ABC Seamless. The company pioneered seamless steel siding in the 1970s, and many homeowners consider siding a permanent solution to the problem of failing siding and shingles.

Made of heavy-gauge steel with a finish that never needs repainting, the company's metal siding is cut to fit each house precisely and installed without random splicing. "People like the look of seamless siding because it's clean and straight," says advertising director Dale Gilbraith. "There are no cracks to trap dirt, leak moisture, or admit insects that can damage a home." Design options include horizontal siding, vertical board and batten, or simulated log siding.

The roof on this home features blended colors and natural-looking shadows.

ABC Seamless also makes roofing with the same qualities and advantages as its siding. "It's screwed on and wind-tested up to 160 mph. That's equal to an EF-3 tornado," says Gilbraith.

Although most manufacturers offer Web-based visualization aids or visually oriented mobile apps, Loughery encourages people to visit dealers' showrooms to see materials up close before finalizing their decisions.

"Twenty-five years ago," he notes, "roofing was just about protection. Now it's about adding character and personality to a home."

Damaine Vonada is a freelance writer based in Xenia, Ohio.

Marvin Windows and Doors is among companies known for customized products.

FUNCTION MEETS STYLE

Options abound with custom windows and doors

By Damaine Vonada

Windows do more than bring light into your home. They provide views of your neighborhood, connect the indoors with the outdoors and accent your home's architecture.

Marvin Windows and Doors, headquartered in Minnesota, is a family business whose expertise dates back to 1939. Today the company is the world's largest premier manufacturer of made-to-order windows and patio-style doors, and its signature brand—Marvin Windows and Doors—is known for wood and clad wood products that can be completely customized.

The company umbrella also encompasses two newer brand—Integrity from Marvin Windows and Doors, which features Ultrex fiberglass products; and Infinity from Marvin Replacement Windows, which uses Ultrex to simulate wood windows

Marvin brand windows typically are installed in upscale new homes. However, they're also used as replacement windows in many mid-range houses, according to Brett Boyum, vice president of marketing for Marvin Windows and Doors. Aside from being a good insulator, wood looks rich. Marvin choices vary from standards like pine and cherry to more unusual black walnut and mahogany. Exterior aluminum cladding is also available in several colors and finishes.

Ultrex is a patented, protruded fiberglass that does not expand or contract in extreme temperatures. Ultrex windows in both lines come in light and dark fade-proof colors. If a homeowner needs to match siding or roofing, they also can be painted. In addition to aesthetics, Boyum reminds homeowners to consider performance because replacement windows should be energy efficient and keep the house comfortable. "The materials in Marvin products meet or exceed most Energy Star requirements," he notes.

Joe Klink, corporate relations director at ProVia, says that value is an important consideration when selecting new windows and doors. "ProVia products are not inexpensive, but they're high value because of their quality and features," says Klink. "You may pay more upfront, but you'll have less hassle later."

ProVia makes exterior doors, replacement windows, vinyl siding and manufactured stone. Operated by the Mullet family, ProVia began in 1977 and its building materials now are distributed nationwide. "ProVia's manufacturing process is set up for customization," Klink says. "If you walked through one of their plants, you'd be hard pressed to find two doors that look alike."

Besides steel and fiberglass entrance doors, ProVia makes aluminum storm doors and vinyl, steel and fiberglass patio doors. "Provia's Legacy Steel entry door is our flagship product," Klink says. "It has heavy 20-gauge steel and a mechanical interlock system for extra strength."

ProVia's website has tools geared to homeowners' four main motivations for replacing exterior doors—beauty, durability, security and energy efficiency. "If beauty is their reason," Klink says, "people can go to the 'Design It' tab and upload a photo of their home to create a new door." Anyone interested in durability or security can access features and specifications tabs, while the "Energy Star" tab calculates the thermal performance of ProVia's door and window components.

ProVia's vinyl window products also deliver energy efficiency and eye-catching design options. "Window performance is all about the U-factor," Klink says. "The lower the number, the better." Measuring heat conduction, the U-factor indicates a window's overall energy efficiency, which can even be affected the kind of gas used in double-pane windows. "Krypton gas insulates better than argon."

Damaine Vonada is a freelance writer based in Xenia, Ohio.

It's good to know which deck stains are more resistant to weathering.

Paint Quality Institute

GOOD TIME FOR PREPPING

Get your wood deck ready for warm weather fun

With the long-awaited arrival of spring, it's high time to ready your wooden deck for the warm months ahead. Tackling the project sooner, rather than later, is smart for a couple of reasons.

"Not only is it more comfortable to work in springtime temperatures, but deck stain forms the most durable, long-lasting finish in mild weather," says Debbie Zimmer, paint and color expert at the Paint Quality Institute. "So, there's little sense in delaying this project."

Begin by assessing the condition of your deck to make sure it's structurally sound. If you see any rotting or damaged boards, carefully replace them before doing anything else. Next, remove any loose paint or stain either by scraping and sanding the surface, or by treating it with a commercial deck conditioner and then power washing the entire deck with plain water. If you are changing the color of your deck, be sure to remove all of the old coating.

Deck staining

With the prep work finished, the fun begins as you plan the color and appearance of your deck. This is where you need to know a few basic facts about deck stain. For starters, deck coatings are available in solvent-based and water-based (latex) formulations; however, the latter offer some big advantages. Water-based stains dry more quickly, are relatively odor-free, and offer simple cleanup with plain soap and water. Most importantly, these stains have better resistance to weathering.

Both types of stain are available as clear finishes and in an array of attractive colors.

If you are thinking about applying a clear finish to show off the natural appearance of the wood on your deck, be aware that these coatings offer very limited protection from the sun's UV rays. You will probably have to reapply your clear coating every year.

For longer-lasting protection, consider a pigmented stain. They come in two types: "semi-transparent" stains, which help protect the wood without hiding its grain or texture; and more heavily pigmented "solid-color" stains, which show the texture, but not the grain. Semi-transparent stains typically need to be reapplied every 18 months or so, while solid-color stains can last three to five years.

Regardless of the type of stain you prefer, it's extremely important that you choose a top quality coating. That's because a deck stain is subject to enormous stress. Not only is it exposed to all types of weather—from strong sunlight to standing water, snow and ice—but it also must endure physical abuse from foot traffic, as well as abrasion from patio furniture, planters and playthings.

So, how can you spot a high quality deck stain? According to Zimmer, you should zero in on a water-based stain made with 100 percent acrylic. "Top quality 100 percent acrylic latex water-based stains are extremely tough and durable. Many of these coatings even contain special ingredients that help prevent mildew from forming, she says.

Application

You can apply your deck stain with spray equipment, a long-handled roller, or with a brush. However, if you use a roller or sprayer, you should "back brush" while the stain is still wet—going back in and brushing the stain—to help it penetrate the wood. When applying 100 percent acrylic latex stain, allow it to dry several hours and apply a second coat to get the best protection for your deck. Of course, always follow the directions on the can label. For more information on deck stains, visit blog.paintquality.com.

Decorating resource

The Paint Quality Institute, based in Spring House, Pa., provides information on the virtues of quality paint as well as color trends and decorating with paint.

For more information, visit paintquality.com.

Keeping pests out

5 mistakes homeowners make that attract them

With warmer temperatures and increased rain, spring is when pesky creatures can invade homes. Homeowners should avoid making these five mistakes that lead to pests.

1 Overlooking tiny cracks

Even tiny cracks and crevices in the foundation, doorways and walls where pipes enter the home could be inviting ants, roaches, spiders, rodents and other pests inside. A rat can squeeze through an opening as small as a quarter and a mouse can fit through a hole the size of a dime. Cockroaches, ants and spiders can enter through tiny crevices, too.

Pests are attracted to shelter, food and water. Homeowners should promptly clean up all water and food spills, seal any cracks and crevices around doors, windows and pipes and install weather stripping around and under all doors, including garage doors.

2 Obtaining second-hand furniture

Buying a home is an expensive investment and it may be tempting to save money with furniture from a thrift shop or garage sale, but bed bugs, spiders and even scorpions have been known to dwell in second-hand upholstered furniture.

Once inside, they can spread from room to room. That's why it's important to inspect and quarantine (for several months if possible) all second-hand furniture before bringing it inside your home.

3 Ignoring insulation

A home's attic can be a gateway inside for many pests, such as rodents and cockroaches, which nest in insulation. Inspect insulation for pest activity and damage such as insulation that is wet, matted down, chewed or covered with droppings. New insulation technology incorporates materials specifically designed to help deter household pests.

4 Ignoring flooring and siding damage

Termites are called "silent destroyers" because they may be secretly thriving in a home or yard without immediate signs of damage. They cause more than $5 billion in damage every year in the United States, according to the National Pest Management Association.

House foundations, wood framing, furniture and shelves are all possible feeding sites for termites. In spring, termites can be seen swarming around windows or doors. Other signs of termite activity include buckling wood, swollen floors and ceilings, and areas that appear to be suffering from slight water damage.

Brick and mortar homes are not termite-proof as they have wooden components, such as framing and flooring. It's important to work with a licensed professional for regular inspections.

5 Not repairing leaks

Minor leaks may seem to be just that—minor—but leaks or condensation, combined with warmer temperatures, can create ideal conditions for cockroaches and other pests. American cockroaches, "camel crickets" and springtails can enter homes through tiny cracks and are attracted to damp areas, both in the attic or crawl space and indoors in the basement, kitchen or bathroom.

Small steps make a big difference. Fix leaking faucets and water pipes and eliminating standing water on the roof or in gutters to help prevent an infestation. For more tips to help prevent common household pests, visit Orkin.com.

—FamilyFeatures.com

Your home office

Consider work goals when organizing it

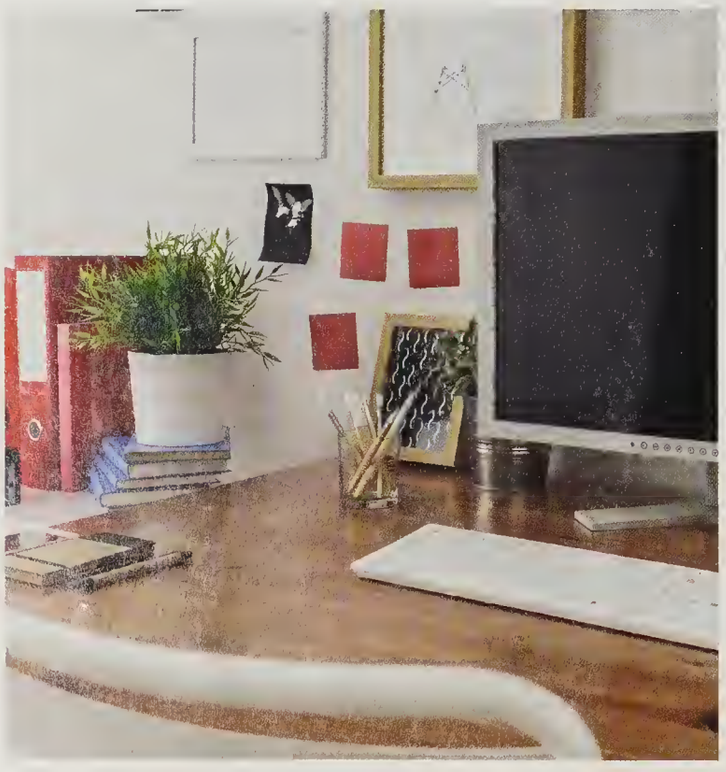
Whether you work full-time from home, or you simply have a space dedicated to paying bills and keeping your life in order, a home office should inspire productivity and happiness. After all, you'll do your best work if you actually want to spend time in your workspace. Here, four business bloggers share their tips for home office success.

Invest a few dollars

"The easiest way to start feeling more like a professional and less like an imposter is to invest in your home office," says Cassie Boorn, guest blogger for Handmade Success, and the woman behind Maker Mentors, a free community designed to help creative entrepreneurs build business. "But there's no need to spend thousands of dollars to create a great workspace. Boorn says it can be done with a budget as small as $25 and a trip to a home office store.

Evolve

As your business evolves and grows, be willing to make changes to your workspace. "The way I've been running my 'business' is from the perspective of a hustling freelancer. I was working a lot but there was no method to the madness. I had no structure," says Vicky Ayala, brand strategist.



She recommends creating a workspace both at home and on-the-go that complements what you want your business to be, paying attention to details. In her case, she equipped herself with supplies that fit the way she works—a binding machine for customer handouts, a tablet and a briefcase that converts into a backpack. "Sometimes it's the small things that help remind us of the bigger picture."

Keep goals in focus

"Have your plan in plain sight for constant review and reminders. Without it, it's too easy to fall back into old routines and unproductive habits," says Lisa Jacobs, a marketing consultant to small businesses and the blogger behind Marketing Creativity.

Jacobs sets and tracks goals religiously by keeping a wall planner mounted in her home office. She used copy and print services to bring her own planner calendar design into reality. For ideas for making your home office more productive, visit Staples.com.

Keep area free of clutter

"One thing that I have learned about myself over the years is that I perform at my best when I have an environment free of clutter. That means no extra stuff on my desk, on my walls or in my office," says Andreea Ayers, the entrepreneur behind Launch Grow Joy, a business that helps entrepreneurs elevate sales.

To beat the clutter, Ayers advises sticking to your essentials and thinking about multipurpose equipment that saves space. Her short list includes a stackable desk tray to sort and contain files, and a laser printer/scanner/copier that can do it all.

—Statepoint

Making the most of a view or adding a plant or two can enhance your office.

Electrical Safety Quiz

May is National Electrical Safety Month! Test your electrical safety knowledge by taking the quiz below.

Energy Explorers

Be an Electrical Safety Ambassador! Cut out the safety badge and tell your family and friends about the importance of electrical safety.

1) Smoke alarms in your home should be tested to ensure they work properly.
   - A. Once a month
   - B. Once a year
   - C. Once a day

2) Electrical cords should be placed under rugs or carpet to keep them out of the way.
   - A. True
   - B. False

3) What should you do if you are outdoors and hear thunder?
   - A. Hide under a tree
   - B. Seek shelter indoors and wait at least 30 minutes
   - C. Stand still

4) It is safe to leave the kitchen with a burner on, as long as it is a short amount of time.
   - A. True
   - B. False

ANSWERS

1) A.

2) False. Electrical cords should never be placed underneath carpet or rugs because they are potential fire hazards.

3) B.

4) False. You should never leave a kitchen burner unattended.

AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

Job interview success

Take smart notes, improve your answers to questions

For graduates and young professionals, first job interviews are a crash course in interpersonal skills and thinking on one's feet. To ease the learning curve a bit, you can use these tips to take smart notes before and during your job interview and answer questions intelligently.

What is the interviewer looking for?

A job interviewer knows that a recent grad will not have a wealth of direct experience. Instead, the interviewer is likely to ask questions to gauge your future potential and critical thinking skills. Interviewers are looking for:

- How you process information
- How you analyze problems
- How you formulate solutions
- Cultural fit with the company

Before your interview, consider each of the above aspects and write down potential answers. Practice various answers out loud in front of a mirror. Another way to prepare is to role play with a friend. Share these four categories and ask him or her to ask you relating questions.

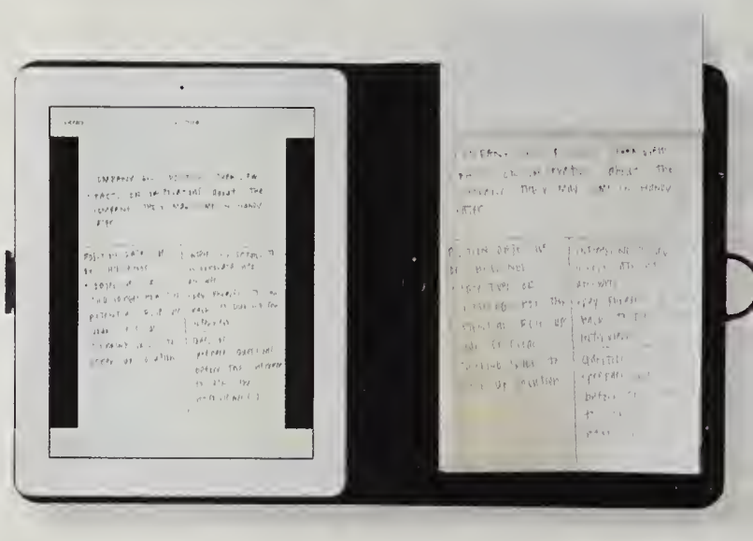
Engage, capture

You'll want to appear engaged in the interview. This can't be emphasized enough. However, you'll also want to capture notes that will help you remember key information for later. Taking notes can also organize your thoughts at the meeting and help you share your problem-solving skills during the interview.

It's a delicate balance. Take too many notes and you've missed part of the conversation and you aren't making the all-important eye contact. Take too few notes and you have no documentation of the meeting. Use bullet points and keep your notes succinct to create an overview of relevant information.

Of course, you'll want to do research before the interview about the company and the job. At the interview, take notes relating to additional information gleaned, including:

- More about the company
- Challenges of the role and for the company
- Details related to the job
- Questions you may have from the interview
- Cultural items to which you have a connection



Immediately after the interview, find someplace quiet and take additional notes. Notes could include impressions of the interviewer, next steps or cultural insights.

Leveraging your notes later

During the interview, use your bullet points to bring your solutions to the challenges of company back into the conversation. This shows that you are actively listening and processing the information.

After the interview, follow up with a thank you email. In this email, expand on some solutions you offered to the company's problems and mention any cultural items in which you think you might have a fit.

If you get a second or third interview, go back to your original notes and rewrite them in narrative form. This will help you prepare for your next interview. In each interview, your responses should build on the information of past interviews.

Seal the deal

There is one big element you can't control: the interviewer's personality. Learn about that person beforehand if possible. If not, observe him or her and sell yourself to that individual. Listen to questions and tailor your answers to that specific person's style.

For more tips about notetaking and interviewing, visit bamboo.wacom.com.

—FamilyFeatures.com

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The new State Employees' Credit Union Learning Center at Millstone 4-H Camp

Amish craftsmen raise a building for the 4-H at Millstone Camp

By Hannah Miller

Millstone 4-H camp, a Pee Dee Electric member, is in a setting beyond rustic: In a longleaf pine forest in North Carolina's Sandhills Game Lands near Ellerbe.

"We've got a long history … with a lot of very old buildings," says director Keith Russell. WPA workers in the 1930s built the 250-acre camp, which has an 18-acre lake and 14 cabins, since upgraded. The camp is used not only by 4-H campers from across the state, but a number of civic organizations as well.

Several years ago, 4-H and N.C. Cooperative Extension Service officials decided to make the camp a year-round destination by adding a heated, air-conditioned auditorium/conference center. They wanted technological amenities like audiovisual capability, but they also wanted to preserve the natural atmosphere and the link to history.

The group raised $1.5 million for the new State Employees' Credit Union Learning Center, with $750,000 coming from the credit union, $250,000 from the Richmond County-oriented Cole Foundation, and the rest from individuals and businesses.

Hobbs Architect of Pittsboro drew plans for a two-section, timber-frame building with naturally stained, exposed roof beams and a similarly rustic wraparound porch. Bristol Construction Services' Wilmington office oversaw construction, and all the lumber was donated by Carolinas companies: Jordan Lumber Co. of Mount Gilead; Culp Lumber Co. in New London; Cameron Lumber Co. of Cameron, S.C.; Industrial Wood Products of Climax; and Pembroke Building Supply of Pembroke.

As builders, planners chose a group of craftsmen with their own strong ties to the past: the Union Grove Amish community from the Hamptonville-Union Grove areas of Yadkin and north Iredell counties.

Union Grove, with 28 families, is North Carolina's only Amish community. From helping each other with barn-raisings and other construction, they've branched out into occasional projects for others, with the money earned going to their school.

At Millstone, they were joined by members of the Chatham, Va., Amish community, a 12-family sister community that they helped establish.

For much of January and on into February of this year, gray-bearded elders and smooth-cheeked teens swarmed over the Millstone site — measuring, cutting, lifting, hammering and nailing. Ages ranged from 16 to his own 65, said crew member Alvin Mast. "We want to keep our kids with us and teach them a trade."

All are New Order Amish. Though they use horses and buggies for transportation, they use electricity and gas-powered construction equipment. Many in Union Grove are EnergyUnited members.

Even when nighttime temperatures dipped into the upper teens, the Amish were at work at 7:30 in the morning, working until dark, said camp director Russell.

Because of the length of the project, wives and children stayed with them in Millstone's cabins. Farming and other chores back in Union Grove were being tended by other members of the community, said Mast.

The open-beam construction was new to the crew, said Mast. "We've never done anything like this before. It's a learning curve for us," he said, but added. "It's coming. We'll get there."

The crew laid out the walls horizontally on the floor, then lifted them high into place, sometimes by hand, sometimes by machine.

Because the Amish don't drive automobiles or trucks, Pembroke Building Supply delivered 8-by-8 timber to their

Hamptonville shop, where massive roof trusses were fashioned. Pembroke then delivered them to Millstone.

What visitors at the April 10 grand opening saw was a silver-colored metal roof covering a naturally-stained board and batten exterior. Pee Dee Electric put electric wires underground.

"We took out as few trees as possible" for the 3,400-square-foot building, says Russell. "We wanted it to nestle in the woods so that when you're in the building, you're looking out through the trees."

The Cole Foundation Auditorium will seat 170. The other half of the building holds conference rooms and a catering kitchen.

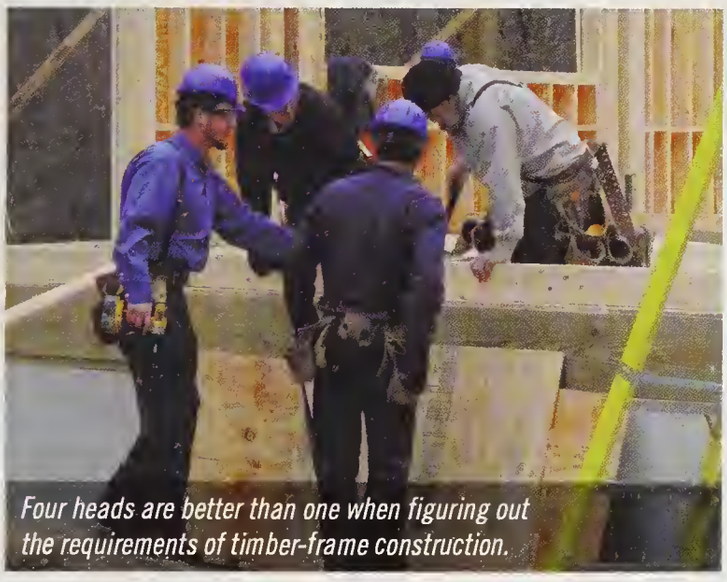
Russell was already taking advance bookings in January, when the center was still just a foundation and an arrangement of vertical planks with holes for windows. Carolina Farm Credit, anticipating a customers' appreciation dinner, was one early registrant, and other groups were setting up educational meetings.

"It's going to be a wonderful building," Russell said. "We wanted to be a regional resource for North Carolina."

Hannah Miller is a Carolina Country contributing writer who lives in Charlotte.

In the cooperative spirit that characterizes Amish construction, four carpenters confer on-site.

Though New Order Amish beliefs rule out driving automobiles, there's no prohibition against construction equipment like forklifts.



Four heads are better than one when figuring out the requirements of timber-frame construction.

Outdoor construction in winter weather requires a high degree of concentration.

Amish craftsmen, working from 7:30 a.m. until dark, bundled up against January's chilly temperatures.

Walls were put together lying on the floor, then raised into place.

I Remember...

Snapshot sisters

As young children, our family moved a lot, we were sharecroppers. There were seven of us children. We also had an aunt, uncle and cousins that stayed with us.

My memories of my childhood are few. I do remember living in a two-story white house with a large front porch.

This snapshot from June 1953 found its way into my hands, not knowing where it came from or where we lived at the time. It is of myself (3½ years) and my sister Shirley (5½ years). This snapshot is very special to me because it's the only one I have ever seen of us when we were small.

With both parents and our oldest sibling deceased, I relied on my older brother Billy. He took the snapshot up to Newton Grove. He recognized the area it was taken—around the circle on the Clinton highway. He has been able to show us and tell us things and places we lived in younger years.

There are six of us living, and we try to get together once a month to celebrate birthdays and spend time together. Childhood memories are few, but I cherish the memories of family so dear. Life is short, so make memories with your families.

Lynda Hinson, Goldsboro, Tri-County EMC

One for the books

Back in 1945, right at the end of World War II, my father wanted to go into business for himself. He had a piece of land, so he built a small shop to manufacture wooden broom handles for the government and dowel rods for the furniture industries.

He purchased some used machinery to do so, and all the machinery ran from one 10-horsepower, 3-phase motor. When he contacted Davidson EMC (our electric co-op at the time, now part of EnergyUnited), they sent out an engineer to surmise the situation. He told my Dad there were not any 3-phase power lines available in the area at that time, but they had learned during the war that three transformers could be banked together on a single-phase line to get a limited amount of 3-phase power. He then asked how much horsepower was needed—Dad said 10, to which the engineer said was possible. It was done and everything worked fine.

As time passed, my Dad kept upgrading and adding machinery as the business grew, to the point the shop was pulling over 80 horsepower. Funny thing though, the power bill kept getting cheaper each month.

In July 1959, we were covered up with orders, it was real hot and I was running a molder that used five 7.5-horsepower motors. I smelled something burning so I shut down the machine thinking one of the motors was overheated, but none were and the smell went away. I started it again, the smell started again, and looking around I noticed a whiff of smoke blowing into the shop from the outside. Shutting down the machine again I ran outside, looked up, saw all three wires to the service pole on fire, ran back in and pulled the main switch.

We called Davidson EMC. A repair crew came out and they radioed for an engineer. The engineer looked at the wires, then pried the power meter out because it was welded to the melted contacts and had shorted across. He pulled his hat off, shook his head and said "that's one for the books" on how a 10-horse service was able to carry 80-plus horses as long as it did.

I'd say that was pretty good engineering.

James C. Harris, Jr., Lexington, EnergyUnited

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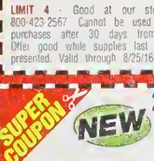

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828-433-7755
rolandsrub.net

Carolina Country Store features interesting, useful products, services, handicrafts, food, books, CDs and DVDs that relate to North Carolina. To submit an item for possible publication, email editor@carolinacountry.com with a description, prices and high-resolution color pictures. Or you can submit by mail: Country Store, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC, 27616. Those who submit must be able to handle mail orders.

on the bookshelf

The Bad Man

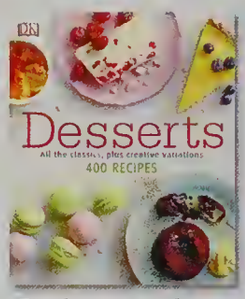
Hitman Benjamin Franklin is a dedicated son, a collector of rare books and a consummate assassin. Together with his partner, Sam Sloane, Franklin takes out the enemies of Papa Theo, his mob boss, with the precision of a guided missile.

But what happens when a killer gains a conscience? After 10 years of murdering for money, Franklin decides it's time to reshape his life, salvage whatever remains of his soul, and give his heart to new love Veronica Barile. He agrees to one more hit, which turns out to be the one man he trusts: his own partner, Sam Sloane. And Sloane is almost supernaturally talented at killing and far more skilled at gunplay.

The author is G. Warlock Vance, an English professor who lives in Asheboro and is a member of Randolph EMC. Published by Element 118 Books in Asheboro. Softcover, 257 pages, $9.99, print; Kindle, $6.99; Nook, $6.99.

800-843-2665
amazon.com

Desserts



This illustrated book pairs 68 classic desserts from around the world with step-by-step photography and ideas for variations, totaling more than 400 recipes. Readers can use it to master the classics, such as New York cheesecake, crème brûleé, crêpes, macaroons and meringues. Each classic is followed by different interpretations on that recipe. Some are familiar, while others introduce exciting new flavor pairings.

There are also ideas for how to decorate and present show-stopping desserts. Written by North Carolina author Caroline Bretherton and writer/photographer Kristan Raines. Published by DK. Hardcover, 304 pages, $35 (print); $22.99 (e-book).

dk.com

Wayfaring Strangers

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Scots migrated to Ulster and then onward to resettle in the United States. Many of these Scots-Irish immigrants made their way into the southern Appalachian Mountains, bringing a wealth of traditional ballads and tunes from the British Isles and Ireland that merged with sounds of English, German, Welsh, African American, French and Cherokee origin. In "Wayfaring Strangers," Fiona Ritchie and Doug Orr guide readers on an epic musical journey across oceans and through centuries of change.

Enriched by insights of key contributors, this illustrated volume includes a CD with 20 songs by musicians profiled, including Dolly Parton, Dougie MacLean, Cara Dillon, John Doyle, Pete Seeger, David Holt and Anais Mitchell. Ritchie is the host of National Public Radio's "The Thistle & Shamrock," and Orr is president emeritus of Warren Wilson College in Asheville and founder of Swannanoa Gathering folk music workshops. Published by UNC Press of Chapel Hill. Hardback, 361 pages, $39.95; e-book $34.99.

800-848-6224
uncpress.unc.edu

Prefer to support independent bookstores? You can cross-reference books and local shops where they are sold by visiting indiebound.org.

WHERE IN CAROLINA COUNTRY IS THIS?

This is a Carolina Country scene in Touchstone Energy territory. If you know where it is, send your answer by May 6 with your name, address and the name of your electric cooperative.

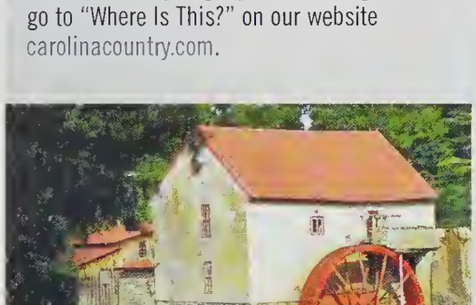
Online: carolinacountry.com

By email: where@carolinacountry.com

Or by mail: Where in Carolina Country?
P.O. Box 27306
Raleigh, NC 27611

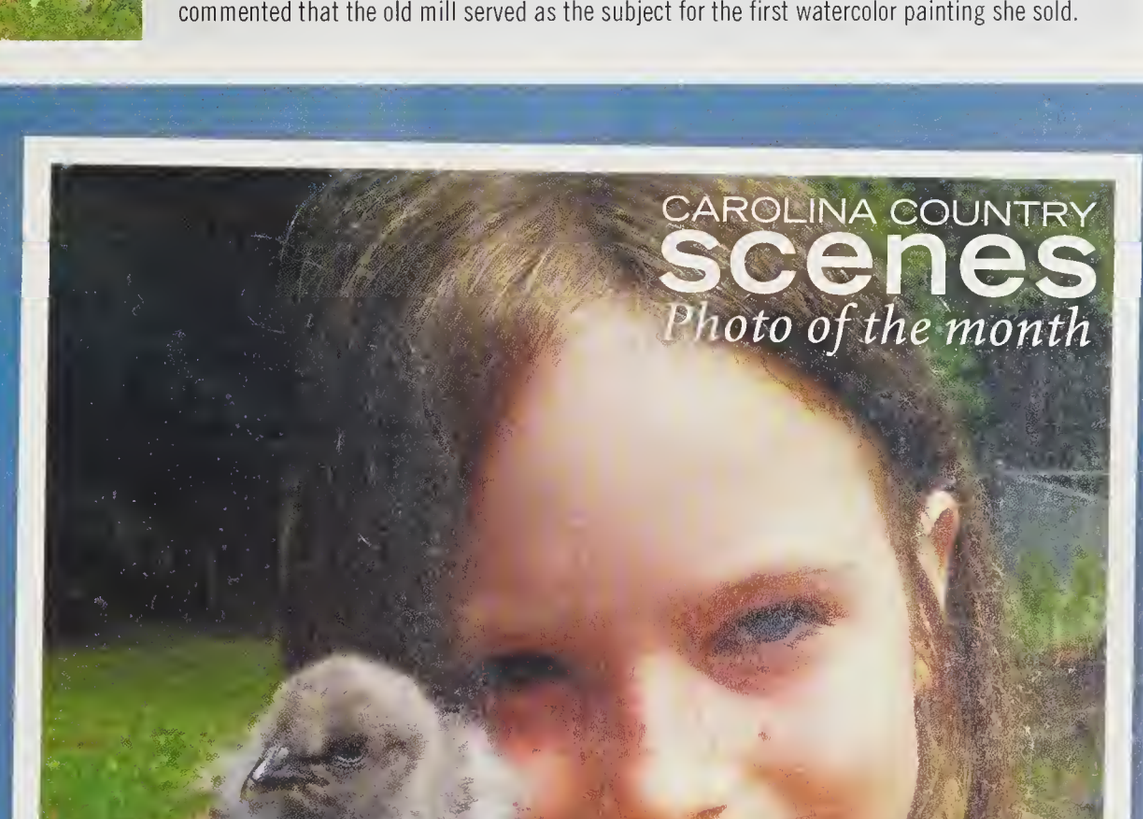
Multiple entries from the same person will be disqualified.

The winner, chosen at random and announced in our June issue, will receive $25. To see the answer before you get your June magazine, go to "Where Is This?" on our website carolinacountry.com.



April

The April magazine scene, taken by Doug Isley, proved to be a favorite with readers. The Old Mill of Guilford, located off Highway 68 in Oak Ridge, is a working grist mill and country store listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Many of you visit the mill and its gift shop to purchase stone-ground meals, grits, flour, mixes, pottery and crafts. One reader remembers fishing in the pond behind the mill as a boy. The winning entry chosen at random from all correct submissions came from Carole Atkins Smith of Bear Creek, a member of Central EMC. Smith commented that the old mill served as the subject for the first watercolor painting she sold.



Hopie the Underchicken

This is me and my chicken, Hopie. Two years ago, our hen, Goldie, hatched some eggs, abandoning five. We tried to hatch them, but four were rotten. The other I helped to hatch. The chick was silver, with black eyes, beak, and feet. Hopie started out weak but grew stronger and started following me—she thought I was her mother. Today she remains my favorite chicken.

Amanda Smith
Louisburg, Wake Electric

The Photo of the Month comes from those that scored an honorable mention from the judges in our 2016 photo contest ("Carolina Country Scenes," February 2016). See even more at the Photo of the Week on our website **carolinacountry.com**.

May Events

Lil John's Mountain Music Fesival
May 26–28, Snow Camp

Mountains

Tourism Day
May 6, Mars Hill
828-689-4257

Naturalist Niche: Treemendous
May 7, Chimney Rock
800-277-9611
chimneyrockpark.com

Springtime In The Carolina Quilt Show
Vendor mall, raffles
May 12–14, Spindale
770-712-7049
rutherfordquiltguildinc.org

Daniel Boone Festival
May 13–15, Ferguson
336-973-3237
whippoorwillacademy.com

Tour de Cashiers
May 14

Comedy Club
May 7, Lenoir
828-754-2486
caldwellarts.com/comedy

Apple Blossom Festival
May 7, Taylorsville
828-632-2999
alexandercountyonline.com/applefestival

Just For You Women's Expo
May 14, Lenoir
828-215-0859
justforyouevents-nc.wix.com/site

Fit Families 5K
May 14, Burnsville
828-682-7899
healthyyancey.org

Roots Music Fest
May 14, Elkin
336-366-9141
facebook.com/elkinrootsmusicfest

Tour de Cashiers
Mountain Cycling Experience
May 14, Cashiers
828-743-5191
tourdecashiers.com

Marathon Jam
May 21, West Jefferson
336-432-0021
marathonjam.org

Writers On The Rock
May 22, Chimney Rock
800-277-9611
chimneyrockpark.com

Night Of The Spoken Word
Poetry & prose readings
May 28, West Jefferson
336-846-2787
ashecountyarts.org

The Cub Seven Miler
May 28, Valle Crucis
828-262-7557
triplecrown.appstate.edu/

Memorial Day Weekend Family Fun
May 28–30, Chimney Rock
800-277-9611
chimneyrockpark.com

LUKEfest 2016 Concert
May 29, Sparta
336-372-5473

ONGOING

Sacred Threads Art Quilt Exhibition
May 10–22, Hayesville
678-549-3900
sacredthreadsquilts.com

Piedmont

Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver Bluegrass Festival
May 5–7, Denton
336-859-2755
dentonfarmpark.com

Kem & Babyface in Concert
May 6, Fayetteville
910-438-4100
crowncomplexnc.com

Sacred Threads Art Quilt Exhibition
May 10–22, Hayesville

Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver Bluegrass Festival
May 5–7, Denton

Thrive
Wellness experience
May 7, Fayetteville
910-323-4848
fayobserver.com/events

Kids Fest
May 7, Fayetteville
910-433-1547
fcpr.us

Family Fun Dayz
May 7 & 14, Fayetteville
910-396-5979
bragg.armymwr.com/us/bragg

Ladies Day Out
May 7, Hamlet
910-331-9965
ladiesdayoutnc.com

Antique Street Fair
May 7, Cameron
910-245-3055
antiquesofcameron.com

SPCC 2016 Multicultural Festival
May 7, Monroe
704-290-5891

The Lantern Fest
May 7, Fayetteville
910-223-7223
thelanternfest.com

Tri-FUN-A-Thon
May 7, Roxboro
336-322-2102
piedmontcc.edu

Mother's Day Weekend Studio & Garden Tour
May 7–8, Wake Forest
919-270-2259

Open House & Garden Tour
May 7–8, Wake Forest
919-270-2259

Sunrise Mass—Ola Gjeillo
May 13, Fayetteville
910-630-7153
singwithcos.org

Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood Live!
May 13, Fayetteville
910-438-4100
crowncomplexnc.com

Stand Up For Autism
May 13–14, Cornelius
701-412-2999
paddleguru.com

LaurelFest Community Festival
May 13–14, Laurel Hill
910-462-2424

Karz for Kidz Car & Truck Show
May 14, Fayetteville
910-728-5372
newlifehopemills.com

Heroes Helping Heroes Pedal & Jam
May 14, King
336-972-5266
heroeshelpingheroes.net

Home
Free movie
May 20, Roxboro
336-597-1709
personcounty.net

Blues & Brews Festival
May 21, Durham
919-623-6075
durhambluesandbrewsfestival.com

Show-Off Car, Truck & Motorcycle Show
May 21, Lexington

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

In case something changes after Carolina Country goes to press, check information from the contact listed.

MecDec Day Celebration
May 21, Charlotte
704-568-1774
charlottemuseum.org

Five N Two Community Fair
May 21, Cameron
919-478-0341
fiventwofoodpantry.com/communityfair

Show-Off Car, Truck & Motorcycle Show
May 21, Lexington
336-357-7126
ach-nc.org

Fayetteville's Military History Overview
May 21, Fayetteville
910-433-1457
fcpr.us

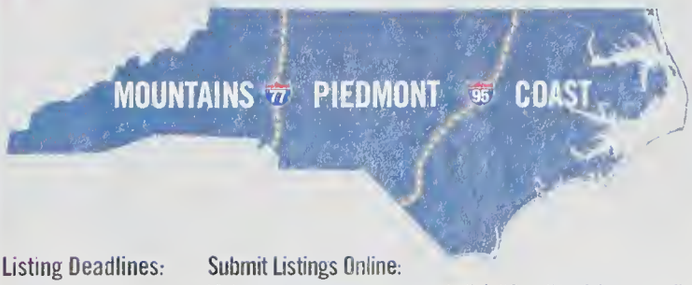
Soldier's Heart: Birth Of PTSD In Civil War
May 22, Fayetteville
910-486-1330
museumofthecapefear.ncdcr.gov

Simply Irresistible Cooking
Making cheese, butter
May 26, Roxboro
336-322-2156
piedmontcc.edu

Salute To U.S. Armed Forces
May 29, Fayetteville

Carolina Compass Policy

- We list events in the magazine as space allows and may edit as needed. We list more events on carolinacountry.com in the Carolina Adventures section.
- All submissions must be made on carolinacountry.com in Carolina Adventures/Submit an Event. Deadlines are posted there, too. ***(No email or U.S. Mail.)***
- Public venue events only. *(No business-hosted events.)*
- Limit 3 events per venue per month in the magazine. More posted online.
- For accuracy, ongoing events must be submitted monthly.
- Public contact required: website, email or phone number.



Listing Deadlines:
For July: May 25
For Aug.: June 25

Submit Listings Online:
Visit carolinacountry.com and click "Carolina Adventures" to add your event to the magazine and/or our website.

Memorial Day Observance
May 30, Eagles Island

Lil John's Mountain Music Fesival
May 26–28, Snow Camp
336-376-8324
littlejohnsmountainmusic.com

Fourth Friday: Field of Honor Opening
May 27, Fayetteville
910-323-1776
theartscouncil.com

The Color Run: Tropicolor
May 28, Fayetteville
910-438-4100
crowncomplexnc.com/events

Salute To U.S. Armed Forces
May 29, Fayetteville
910-433-4690
fayettevillesymphony.org

ONGOING

Art & Flowers Exhibition
Through May 21, Fayetteville
910-483-1388
ellington-white.com

Artquilts Voices
Through July 2, Cary
919-460-4963
paqa-south.org

ArtFest & Found Object Collection
May 2–31, Roxboro
336-597-1709
personcounty.net

Ring Of Fire
Story of Johnny Cash
May 12–June 5, Fayetteville
910-323-4234
cfrt.org

Hedwig & the Angry Inch
Story of Self-Discovery
May 19–June 5, Fayetteville
910-323-4234
cfrt.org

Coast

Sunset Beach Waterfront Market
May 5, Sunset Beach
888-573-2235

First Friday Artwalk
May 6, Greenville
252-561-8400
uptowngreenville.com

Business Expo
May 6, Greenville
252-752-4101
greenville.org

There are more than 200 farmers markets in North Carolina.
For one near you, visit **ncfarmfresh.com/farmmarkets.asp**

Juleps & Jazz
May 7, Supply
910-612-7912

Red Barn Bluegrass Festival
May 7, Aulander
252-348-2243
redbarnbluegrassfestival.webs.com

Farmers Market
May 7, Shallotte
910-754-4032
townofshallotte.org

Derby Dash Bash
May 7, Greenville
252-341-6714
rhrnc.com

Celebration Of Youth Expression
Talent show
May 7, Greenville
252-355-7981

Kings of Q BBQ Cook-Off & Festival
May 20–21, Ayden
252-746-2266
aydenbbq.org

North Carolina Potato Festival
May 20–22, Elizabeth City
252-338-4104
ncpotatofestival.com

Crystal Coast Boat Show
May 21–22, Morehead City
252-808-0440
crystalcoastboatshow.com

Bath Fest & First Port Celebration
May 28, Bath
252-923-3971
bathfest.com

Memorial Day Celebration
May 29, Shallotte
910-754-4032
townofshallotte.com

North Carolina Potato Festival
May 20–22, Elizabeth City

70th Anniversary of The Old Theater
May 14, Oriental
252-249-0140
oldtheater.org

Music & Memories
May 13–14, Oriental
252-249-0477
oldtheater.org

Wade In The Water: A Tribute To Wilmington
May 15, Wilmington
910-362-7999
cfcc.edu

Friday Flicks: In The Heart Of The Sea
May 20, Oriental
252-249-0140
oldtheater.org

Country Roads Bike Tour
May 21, Scotland Neck
252-826-3152
townofscotlandneck.com

Mulberry Park Grand Opening
May 20–21, Shallotte
910-754-4032
townofshallotte.org

Memorial Day Observance
May 30, Eagles Island
910-251-5797

Shallowbag Bay Shag Beach Music Festival
May 30, Manteo
252-475-1500
obxshag.com

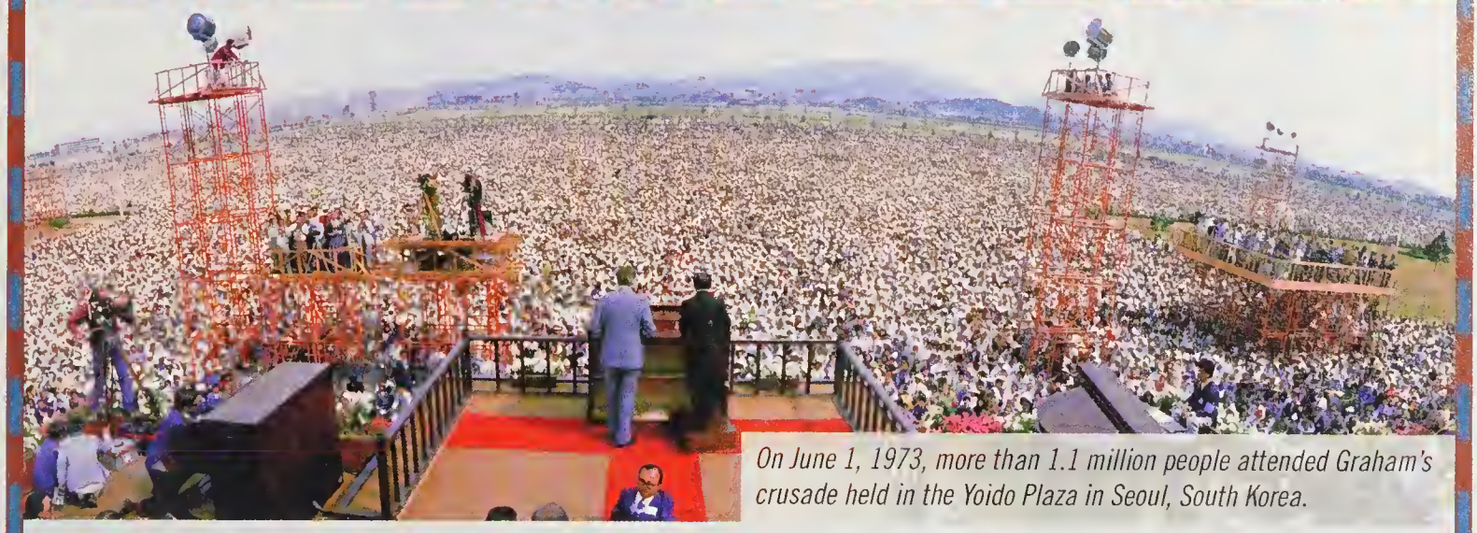
ONGOING

Beaufort Co. Choral Society/Concerts
May. 1–8, Washington
252 946 2504
beaufortcountychoralsociety@gmail.com

Waterfront Market
May 4–Sept. 28, Southport
910-279-4616

Alive After Five
May 5–June 23, Lumberton
910-874-4189
rediscoverdowntownlumberton.org

Movies In The Park
May 7–July 16, Leland
910-332-4823
townofleland.com



On June 1, 1973, more than 1.1 million people attended Graham's crusade held in the Yoido Plaza in Seoul, South Korea.

CAROLINA COUNTRY

adventures

Billy Graham exhibit showcases the life of North Carolina's 'Favorite Son'

Photo courtesy of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

A 5,000-square-foot exhibit at the North Carolina Museum of History tells the story of a humble North Carolina farm boy who grew up to preach live to more than 215 million people in more than 185 countries. Billy Graham preached to many millions more over the radio, television, in film and online.

The exhibit, "North Carolina's Favorite Son: Billy Graham and His Remarkable Journey of Faith," features personal memorabilia, interactive displays and multimedia. The exhibit title is from the 2013 resolution passed by the N.C. General Assembly honoring the life of Graham's wife, Ruth Bell Graham, and naming Graham "North Carolina's Favorite Son."

Visitors walk through Graham's life story, beginning with his childhood growing up on a Charlotte dairy farm, through his early radio days of preaching the Gospel, to his worldwide reach that has touched so many lives. His influence on national and world events, such as the Civil Rights Movement and the Cold War, are showcased through images, audio and video displays.

The seven-section exhibit traces Graham's early life and ministry, from his childhood to his spiritual awakening and worldwide journey. It includes a look at his 12 N.C. crusades, as well as other events held in Los Angeles, London, New York City and South Africa. Personal items include the American flag flown over the U.S. Capitol Building in honor of Ruth and Billy Graham's 50th wedding anniversary; the miniature dictation machine Graham used to prepare sermons; and the tuxedo he wore when knighted at the British Embassy in 2001.

The exhibit's photographs feature large murals depicting the attendance at crusades held around the world. Other images highlight his family life, personal moments and meetings with presidents, as well as other national and world leaders.

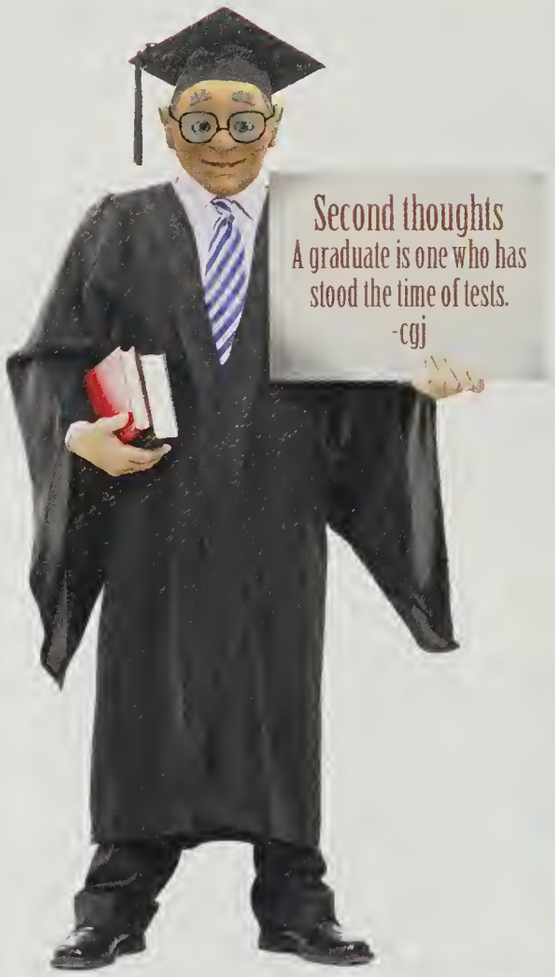
"Billy Graham, a native son of North Carolina, is known for his positive impact in our state and around the world," said Ken Howard, director of the N.C. Museum of History. "The museum is proud to present his life story in this major exhibit…"

The exhibit is privately funded, developed and produced by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. The free exhibit runs through July 10.

"North Carolina's Favorite Son: Billy Graham and His Remarkable Journey of Faith"
N.C. Museum of History
5 E. Edenton Street
Raleigh, NC 27699

919-807-7900
ncmuseumofhistory.org

You can reach Charles Joyner by email: joyner@carolinacountry.com



UNSCRAMBL/T

North Carolinians announced

their freedom from _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
s b a e a l r

_ _ _ _ more than a year before
b d m c

Thomas Jefferson drafted America's

Declaration of Independence.

Use the capital letters in the code key below to fill in the blanks above.

B E H I L R S T U means
s c r a m b l e d

DAFFYNITION:

commodious—a residence with more than two bathrooms

CHINESE PROVERB

Borrowed _ _ _ _ _ _ shortens _ _ _ _ _.
l e v s t i o l s

Use capital letters in the code key below to fill in the blanks above.

E I M N O T Y means
s o l v e i t

SQUARED

Can you arrange the digits 56789 into an equation for a perfect square?

AB x AB = BCDE

MATCHBOXES

1	8	3	6
		x	2
			2
			E

4	6	3	2
		x	2
			4
			R

Solve these multiplication problems and write your answers on the blanks. Then use the code key below to find hidden words in your answers.

1 2 3 4 6 7 8 9
D E C R A P I F

For answers, please see page 41

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Age	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
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50-54	$11.50	$9.70	$18.50	$15.50	$36.00	$30.00	$88.50	$73.50
55-59	$14.20	$11.95	$23.00	$19.25	$45.00	$37.50	$111.00	$92.25
60-64	$17.20	$13.30	$28.00	$21.50	$55.00	$42.00	$136.00	$103.50
65-69	$20.50	$16.00	$33.50	$26.00	$66.00	$51.00	$163.50	$126.00
70-74	$27.40	$21.40	$45.00	$35.00	$89.00	$69.00	$221.00	$171.00
75-79	$37.00	$30.10	$61.00	$49.50	$121.00	$98.00	$301.00	$243.50
80-85	$50.50	$42.55	$83.50	$70.25	$166.00	$139.50	$413.50	$347.25

The rates above include a $12 annual policy fee.

This is a solicitation of insurance, an agent (In OR & WA: producer) may contact you. **These policies contain benefits, reductions, limitations, and exclusions to include a reduction in death benefits during the first two years of policy ownership.** Policy Form ICC11L057P or state equivalent (in FL: 7722L-0505; in NY: 827Y-0505). Not available in all states. In NY, during the first two years, 110% of premiums will be paid. Website unavailable for NY residents. EASY WAY Whole Life Insurance is underwritten by United of Omaha Life Insurance Company, Omaha, NE 68175, which is licensed nationwide except NY. Life insurance policies issued in NY are underwritten by Companion Life Insurance Company, Hauppauge, NY 11788. Each company is responsible for its own financial and contractual obligations. *Age eligibility and benefits may vary by state. **In FL and MD policy is renewable until age 121.

AFN44167_0113

By Patrick Keegan

Energy efficiency projects

Ensuring high-quality work from your contractor

Jack Amjick

Fiberglass batts perform better if measured and cut properly.

If you want to hire a contractor for energy efficiency projects, the good news is there are many performing high-quality work.

That being said, it's smart to first figure out what you can do to ensure your contractors deliver the kind of quality you'll be paying for.

The best assurance solution for most homeowners is to start with a home energy audit by a qualified, experienced energy auditor. Ask the auditor to specify products and quality standards for each recommended efficiency measure.

Using an auditor throughout your home energy upgrade will cost several hundred dollars, but you will know what work is truly needed, and you can prevent poor quality or incomplete work. Your electric co-op may offer a free or discounted audit by one of its energy advisors, or it may have a list of trusted energy auditors in your area. In some areas, there are contractors experienced in whole home energy efficiency upgrades who can perform the energy audit themselves and then do the work.

Once you have a description of what work needs to be done, start identifying contractors. Some co-ops offer financial incentives and/or know of contractors who have energy efficiency experience.

The energy auditor can help you with questions to ask potential contractors such as:

- Is the contractor licensed and insured in North Carolina or any other state in which you have a home that needs work? Do they have any additional training? For example, the Building Performance Institute (BPI) certifies contractors who have training in whole home energy efficiency improvements.
- For heating and cooling projects, how will the contractor decide what size equipment is needed? Will they inspect duct work and insulation throughout your home?
- For insulation and weatherization upgrades, what is your insulation level now? What should it be? Will the contractor find and seal any air leaks before installing the insulation?
- For all projects, who will actually be at your home doing the work—the person you are talking to? An installer employed by the same company? Or a sub-contractor?

Do plenty of research before fully engaging a contractor:

- Don't take the first offer: Get at least two bids. The lowest quote might not necessarily be the best: If one quote is significantly lower than others, inquire closely about the reasons.
- Check their work: Ask for and check references, read online reviews and ask local experts about any experience they have with the contractor.
- Once you have chosen a contractor, make sure you and the contractor agree on the written description of the work to be performed, the expected timeframe for completion and the price. If the contractor insists on providing an estimate rather than a firm bid, discuss what might cause the final bill to be higher than quoted.

Some common areas of tension are also worth discussing:

- How often and when will the contractor communicate with you about the project's status?
- How clean does the work area need to be at the end of each day?
- What is the daily work schedule?

It's best not to pay the contractor until work is completed and inspected. You and the energy auditor should both inspect the work.

This article was co-written by Patrick Keegan and Amy Wheeless of Collaborative Efficiency. Patrick Keegan writes on energy efficiency for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. For more information on ensuring quality energy efficiency work, visit: collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips.

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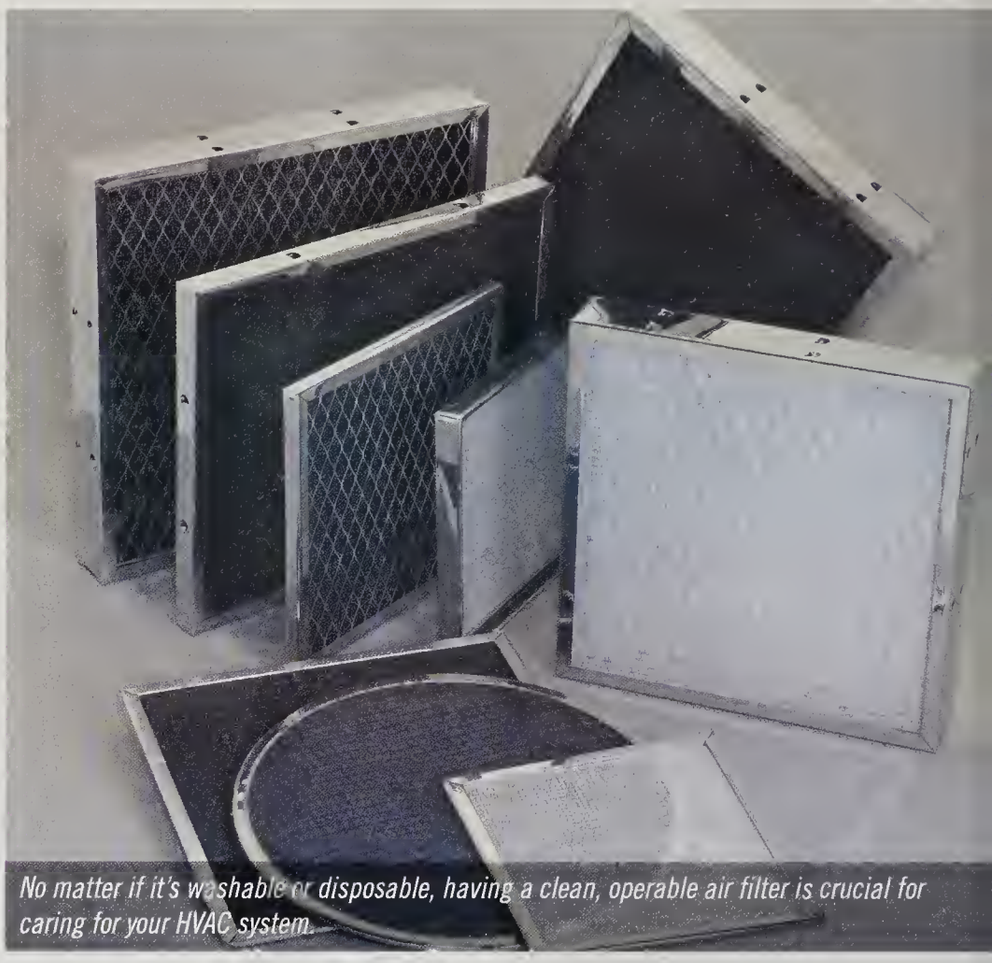
By Hannah McKenzie

Reducing waste with washable air filters

Q: I am tired of purchasing new air filters for my HVAC system every month or so. I try to minimize the amount of trash I make and money I spend. Are washable air filters a good option?



No matter if it's washable or disposable, having a clean, operable air filter is crucial for caring for your HVAC system.

A: An internet search will reveal nearly any product that our heart desires, including a variety of washable, or sometimes called reusable HVAC air filters. For cheapskates like myself who don't mind routinely hosing down or vacuuming the air filter, it sounds like an awesome idea. But, considering that most people don't reliably change air filters and a new HVAC system costs somewhere around $5,000, or as I like to think of it—a used car—you realize that proceeding with caution is in your best interest.

HVAC air filters are critical for the HVAC system to last a full life, be energy efficient, and keep our homes comfortable. Regardless of being washable, a dirty or restrictive air filter will make the HVAC fan work extra hard to move air and heat or cool your home. On the other hand, an air filter that allows larger particles through can make the HVAC system dusty and reduce its performance. So primarily having a clean, operable air filter is extremely important for saving money and caring for your HVAC system. Sometimes a secondary benefit from air filters is improved indoor air quality.

Washable air filters are already common in through-wall/window air conditioning units, ductless mini-split HVAC systems, and whole-house air cleaning units.

To find the right washable air filter for an existing HVAC system, a conversation with your HVAC technician will point you in the direction of quality products. Most people will be looking for a 1" thick filter priced from $20 on up. A 4" thick washable filter is often available from the HVAC system manufacturer. Washable filters are made from a variety of materials such as plastic, foam, electrostatic materials, or activated charcoal. What's more important than cost or materials is a filter that will perform well with your HVAC system.

As you narrow down the options, here are some questions to consider:

- What filter dimensions do I need?
- How do I clean the filter? Is it easy or hard?
- If water is needed for cleaning, how long does the filter take to dry? Would purchasing two filters be wise?
- How often will I need to clean the filter?
- Am I certain that I will reliably clean the filter?
- Will this filter work with my HVAC unit or void any warrantees?
- Will this product match the filter benefits or MERV rating I want?

What's the typical lifetime for the filter?

Certainly, big home improvement projects, such as a new HVAC system or whole-house air cleaning system, may offer cost-effective opportunities to reduce energy use and waste. But there are other incremental ways to reduce waste, keep HVAC maintenance costs low and maintain comfort. Reusable filters have specific features and benefits that may help you get there. But like many other products, they may not be a "silver-bullet."

Hannah McKenzie is a residential building science consultant for Advanced Energy in Raleigh.

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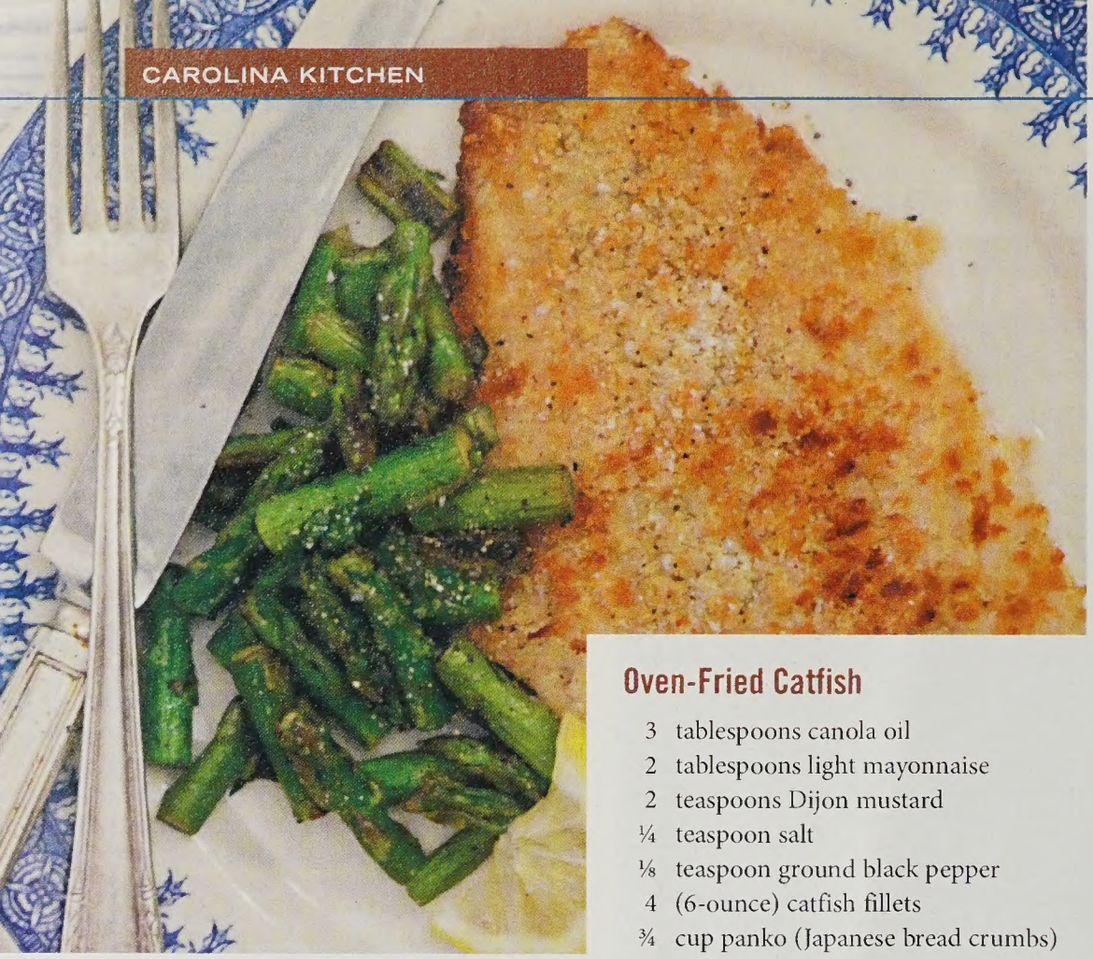

Asparagus with Garlic and Thyme

- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 cloves garlic, sliced
- 4 cups chopped fresh asparagus
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add garlic; cook until lightly browned, about 30 seconds. Remove from skillet with a slotted spoon, and set aside.

Add asparagus to skillet; cook until lightly browned and tender, about 4 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in salt, pepper, thyme, parsley, vinegar and garlic.

Oven-Fried Catfish

- 3 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 tablespoons light mayonnaise
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 4 (6-ounce) catfish fillets
- ¾ cup panko (Japanese bread crumbs)
- 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese
- ¼ teaspoon paprika
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- Lemon wedges, for serving

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Pour oil into a large rimmed baking sheet, swirling to coat. Place in oven until very hot, about 4 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, combine mayonnaise, mustard, salt and pepper; spray 1 side of fish with cooking spray. Turn fish over; brush with mayonnaise mixture. In another small bowl, combine bread crumbs, cheese, paprika and onion powder. Sprinkle over top of fish, pressing gently. Carefully place fillets on hot oil. Drizzle fish with butter.

Bake until crumb topping is golden brown and fish flakes easily when tested with a fork, about 17 minutes. Serve with lemon wedges.

Italian Cream Pie

- 1 (11.3-ounce) package pecan shortbread cookies, such as Pecan Sandies
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 1 (8-ounce) container mascarpone cheese
- ⅔ cup sour cream
- ¼ cup plus 4 tablespoons cream of coconut, such as Coco Lopez
- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ cup sweetened flaked coconut, toasted, plus extra for optional topping
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon lemon zest
- Pecans for garnish, optional

Garnish

Sweetened flaked coconut, toasted, and chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In the bowl of a processor, pulse cookies into fine crumbs. In a medium bowl, stir together cookie crumbs and melted butter. Using the bottom of a measuring cup, press mixture into bottom and up sides of a 9-inch removable-bottom tart pan.

Bake until light golden brown, approximately 12 minutes. Let cool completely on a wire rack.

In a medium bowl, beat cream cheese, mascarpone, sour cream, cream of coconut, and sugar at medium-high speed with an electric mixer until smooth. Add coconut, vanilla and zest, beating until combined. Spoon mixture into prepared crust.

Cover and refrigerate at least 3 hours and up to 3 days. Garnish with pecans and coconut before serving, if desired.

From Your Kitchen

Cherry Nut Dessert (a.k.a. Dump Cake)

- 1 can (1 pound) cherry pie filling
- 1 box white cake mix
- 1 stick margarine or butter
- 1 cup chopped nuts

Dump can of cherry pie filling into a 9-by-13-inch pan. Dump cake mix on top of cherry pie filling. Dot the top evenly with pats of margarine or butter. Sprinkle nuts over top. Bake in oven at 350 degrees for about 30–45 minutes or when top gets brown and cake mix layer is done.

This recipe comes from Anna Grady of Morganton.

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